A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE,

ABRIDGED FROM

THE ORIGINAL WORK

OF

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A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTION.

DEVOTION is neither private nor public prayer; but prayers, whether private or public, are particular parts, or inſtances, of devotion. Devotion ſignifies a life given or devoted to God. He therefore is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and ſpirit of the world, but to the ſole will of God; who conſiders God in every thing; who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, and lives under ſuch rules as are conformable to the glory of God.

WE readily acknowledge that God alone is to be the rule and meaſure of our prayers, and that in them we are to look wholly unto him, and act wholly for him; that we are only to pray in ſuch a manner, for ſuch things, and for ſuch ends, as are ſuitable to his glory.

Now let any one but find out the reaſon why he is to be thus ſtrictly pious in his prayers, and he will find the ſame

to be as ſtrong a reaſon why he ſhould be equally pious in all the other parts of his life: for there is not the leaſt ſhadow of reaſon, why we ſhould make God the rule and meaſure of our prayers, why we ſhould then look wholly unto him, and pray according to his will, but what proves it equally neceſſary for us to look wholly unto God, and make him the rule and meaſure of all the other actions of our life. Any way of life, any employment of our talents, whether of our parts, our time, or our money, that is not ſtrictly according to the will of God, or for ends ſuitable to his glory, is as great an abſurdity and failing as prayers that are not according to the will of God.

WERE it not our ſtricteſt duty to live by reaſon, to devote all the actions of our lives to God; were it not abſolutely neceſſary to walk before him in wiſdom and holineſs, doing every thing in his name and for his glory, there would be no excellency or wiſdom in the moſt heavenly prayers. Nay, ſuch prayers would be an abſurdity; they would be like prayers for wings, when it is no part of our duty to fly. As ſure therefore as there is any wiſdom in praying for the ſpirit of God, ſo ſure it is that we are to make that ſpirit the rule of all our actions.

IT is for want of knowing, or at leaſt conſidering this, that we ſee ſuch a mixture of every thing ridiculous in the lives of many people. You ſee them ſtrict as to the times and places of devotion; but when the ſervice of the church is over, they are like thoſe who ſeldom or never go there. This is the reaſon why they are the jeſt and ſcorn of careleſs and worldly people; not becauſe they are really devoted to God, but becauſe they appear to have no other devotion but that of occaſional prayers.

IF you aſk a man who is very fearful of miſſing prayers, ſo that the pariſh ſuppoſes him to be ſick if he is not at Church, but who ſpends the reſt of his time by *humour* or *chance*; who is the companion of the ſillieſt people in their

moſt filly pleaſures; who is ready for every impertinent entertainment or diverſion; gives himſelf up to an idle goſſipping converſation; allows himſelf in fooliſh hatreds and reſentments againſt particular perſons, without conſidering that he is "to love his neighbour as himſelf:" if you aſk ſuch a man why he never puts his converſation, his time, and fortune under the rules of Religion, he has no more to ſay for himſelf but that he lives like the reſt of the world.

Now the whole tenour of Scripture lies as directly againſt ſuch a life, as againſt debauchery and intemperance. He that lives in ſuch a courſe of idleneſs and folly, lives no more according to the religion of Jeſus Chriſt than he that lives in gluttony and intemperance. And yet if you were to tell ſuch a perſon that there was no occaſion for ſo much conſtancy at prayers, and that he might without any harm to himſelf neglect the ſervice of the Church as the generality of people do, he would think you were no Chriſtian, and that he ought to avoid your company: but if you only tell him that he may live as the generality of the world does; that he may ſpend his time and money as people of faſhion do; that he may conform to the follies and frailties of the multitude, and gratify his paſſions and propenſities as moſt people do; he will never ſuſpect that you can want a Chriſtian ſpirit. If however he was to read all the New Teſtament from the beginning to the end, he would find his courſe of life condemned in every page of it: nay it is obvious to the meaneſt capacity that nothing can be more abſurd than wiſe, ſublime and heavenly prayers, added to a life of folly and vanity, where neither time nor money are under the direction of the wiſdom and heavenly temper of our prayers.

The ſhort of the matter is this: either reaſon and religion preſcribe rules and ends to all the ordinary actions of our life, or they do not. If they do, then it is as neceſſary to govern all our actions by theſe rules, as it is neceſſary to worſhip God: for if religion teaches how

we are to conduct ourſelves in common life; how we are to be diſpoſed towards all people; how we are to behave towards the ſick, the poor, the old, and deſtitute; if it tells us whom we are to regard with particular eſteem; if it tells us how we are to treat our enemies, and how we are to deny and mortify ourſelves, he muſt be very weak that can think theſe parts of religion are not to be obſerved with as much exactneſs as any doctrines that relate to prayers.

THE religion or devotion which is to govern the ordinary actions of our life is to be found in almoſt every verſe of Scripture. Our bleſſed Lord and his Apoſtles are wholly taken up in doctrines that relate to common life; they call us to renounce and differ in every part of our conduct from the ſpirit and way of the world; to be as new born babes that are born in a new ſtate of things; to live as pilgrims in ſpiritual watchings, in holy fear, and heavenly aſpirings after another life; to take up our daily croſs; to deny ourſelves; to ſeek the bleſſedneſs of poverty of ſpirit; to forſake the pride and vanity of riches; to live in the deepeſt humility; to rejoice in worldly ſufferings; to reject the luſts of the fleſh; to forbear injuries; to forgive and bleſs our enemies, and to love mankind as God loveth them; to give up our whole hearts and affections to God, and ſtrive to enter through the ſtraight gate into a life of eternal glory.

THIS is the common doctrine which our bleſſed Lord taught in order to make it the life of all Chriſtians. If then we are to be wiſe and holy as the new born ſons of God, we can be ſo no otherwiſe than by renouncing every thing that is fooliſh and vain in every part of our common life; if we are to follow Chriſt, it muſt be in our common way of ſpending every day, ſo that Chriſtianity is ſo far from leaving us to live according to the ordinary ways of life, conforming to the folly of cuſtoms, and gratifying the paſſions which the ſpirit of the world delights in; is ſo far from indulging us in any of theſe things, that all its virtues, which it makes neceſſary to

ſalvation, are only ſo many ways of living above, and contrary to, the world in all the common actions of our life.

But though it is thus plain, that this, and this alone is Chriſtianity, viz. an open, uniform and viſible practice of all theſe virtues, yet it is as plain that there is little or nothing of this to be found even amongſt the better ſort of people. You ſee them often at Church, and pleaſed with fine Preachers; but look into their lives, and you ſee them juſt the ſame ſort of people, that others are who make no pretence to devotion. They have the ſame taſte for the world, the ſame worldly cares, and fears, and joys; they have the ſame turn of mind, the ſame weak and ridiculous deſires; they have the ſame fondneſs for ſtate and equipage, the ſame pride and vanity of dreſs, the ſame ſelf love and indulgence, the ſame fooliſh friendſhips and groundleſs hatreds, the ſame fondneſs for diverſions, the ſame idle diſpoſitions, and the ſame trifling ways of ſpending their time.

I do not make theſe compariſons betwixt people ſeemingly good, and profeſſed rakes, but betwixt people of ſober lives, uſually ſtiled good ſort of people. Where muſt you look to find one perſon of Religion differing in this manner from another that hath none? And yet if they do not differ in theſe things, can it with any ſenſe be ſaid, that the one is a good Chriſtian, and the other not?

Now to have right notions with relation to this world is as eſſential to Religion, as to have right notions of God; and it is as poſſible for a man to worſhip an idol, and yet be a pious man, as to have his affections ſet upon this world, and yet be a good Chriſtian: for if the doctrines of Chriſtianity were to be practiſed, they would make a man as different from other people as to worldly diſpoſitions, ſenſual pleaſures, and the pride of life, as a wiſe man is different from a fool. It would be as eaſy a thing to know a Chriſtian by his outward courſe of life, as it is now difficult to find any body that lives according to the genuine ſpirit of Chriſtianity.

IT is notorious that Chriſtians are now not only like other men in their frailties and infirmities, (this might be in ſome degree excuſable) but that they are like Heathens in all the main and chief articles of their lives. Every body capable of reflection muſt have obſerved, that this is generally the ſtate of devout people, whether men or women. You ſee them different from other people as far as relates to times and places of prayer, but like the reſt of the world in all the other parts of their lives; that is, adding a Chriſtian devotion to a Heathen life.

I HAVE the authority of our bleſſed Saviour for this remark, where he ſays, "Take no thought, ſaying what ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink, or wherewithal ſhall we be cloathed? for after all theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek." And do not our modern Chriſtians place as much happineſs in eating, drinking, and dreſſing as ever the Gentiles did? But aſſuredly they who indulge in theſe ſenſual pleaſures, who have a perpetual thirſt after diverſions, ſtudy the vanities of dreſs, are fond of ſhew and greatneſs, or any other gaudy diſtinction of fortune, diſcover ſigns of a heathen temper; and they who add devotion to ſuch a life, muſt be ſaid to pray as Chriſtians, but to live as Heathens.

CHAPTER II.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE REASON, WHY THE GENERALITY OF CHRISTIANS FALL SO SHORT OF THE HOLINESS AND DEVOTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

IT may now be reaſonably inquired how it comes to paſs, that the lives, even of the better ſort of people, are thus ſtrangely contrary to the principles of Chriſtianity.

BUT before I give a direct anſwer to this, I deſire it may alſo be inquired, how it comes to paſs that ſwearing is ſo common a vice amongſt Chriſtians. It is indeed not yet ſo common amongſt women; but amongſt men this ſin is ſo frequent, that perhaps there are more than two in three who are guilty of it through the whole courſe of their lives, ſwearing more or leſs, juſt as it happens, ſome conſtantly, others only now and then, as it were by chance. Now I aſk, how comes it that two in three of the men are guilty of ſo groſs and profane a ſin as this? There is neither ignorance nor human infirmity to plead for it. It is againſt an expreſs commandment and the moſt plain doctrine of our bleſſed Saviour. Do but find the reaſon why the generality of men live in this notorious vice, and then you will have found the reaſon, why the generality even of the better ſort of people live in many other reſpects ſo contrary to Chriſtianity.

NOW the reaſon of common ſwearing is, becauſe men have not ſo much as the intention to pleaſe God in all their actions: for let a man have but ſo much piety as to wiſh and intend to pleaſe him in all the actions of his life, as the happieſt and beſt thing in the world, and then he will never ſwear more. It will be as impoſſible for him to ſwear, whilſt he feels this intention within himſelf, as

it is impoſſible for a man, who intends to pleaſe his prince, to go up and abuſe him to his face.

It ſeems but a ſmall and a neceſſary part of piety to have ſuch a ſincere intention as this; and he has no reaſon to look upon himſelf as a diſciple of Chriſt, who is not thus far advanced in piety. And yet it is merely for want of this degree of piety, that you ſee ſuch a mixture of ſin and folly in the lives even of the better ſort of people. It is for want of this intention that you ſee men, who profeſs religion, yet living in habits of ſwearing and ſenſuality; that you ſee clergymen given to pride, and covetouſneſs, and worldly enjoyments. It is for want of this intention, that you ſee women, who profeſs devotion, yet living in all the folly and vanity of dreſs, waſting their time in pleaſure and idleneſs, and in all ſuch kinds of extravagance as their fortunes will allow.

It was this general intention that made the primitive Chriſtians ſuch eminent examples of piety; that produced the goodly fellowſhip of the ſaints, and all the glorious army of martyrs and confeſſors. And if you will here ſtop, and aſk yourſelf why you are not as pious as the primitive Chriſtians were, your own heart will tell you that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely becauſe you never thoroughly intended it. You obſerve the ſame Sunday's worſhip as they did, and you are ſtrict in it, becauſe it is your intention ſo to be; and when you as fully intend to be like them in their ordinary mode of living, when you determine to pleaſe God in all your actions, you will find it as poſſible as to be ſtrictly exact in the ſervice of the Church.

Let a tradeſman have this intention, and his common buſineſs will be a courſe of wiſe and reaſonable actions, made holy to God by being done in obedience to his will and pleaſure: he will buy and ſell, and labour and travel, becauſe by ſo doing he can do ſome good to himſelf and others. But then as nothing can pleaſe God, but what is wiſe, holy, and reaſonable, he will conſider not what arts,

or methods, or application, will ſooneſt make him richer and greater than his brethren, or remove him from a life of labour to a life of eaſe and pleaſure; but he will conſider what arts, or methods, or application, will make worldly buſineſs moſt acceptable to God, and make a life of trade a life of piety, holineſs, and devotion. This will be the ſpirit of every tradeſman, whenever it is his intention to pleaſe God in all his actions, as the beſt and happieſt thing in the world. And on the other hand, whoever is not of this ſpirit and temper in his trade or profeſſion, and does not endeavour to render it ſubſervient to a wiſe and holy life, may be aſſured that he has not this intention; and yet without it, who can be ſaid to be a follower of Jeſus Chriſt?

AGAIN, let the gentleman of birth and fortune have but this intention, and you will ſee how it will carry him from every appearance of evil to every act of piety and goodneſs. He cannot live by chance, or as humour and fancy direct him, becauſe he knows nothing can pleaſe God but a wiſe and regular courſe of life. He cannot live in idleneſs and indulgence, in ſports and gaming, in pleaſures and intemperance, in vain expences and extravagance, becauſe theſe things cannot be turned into means of piety and holineſs, nor made ſo many parts of a religious life.

As he thus removes from all appearance of evil, ſo he haſtens and aſpires after every ſpecies of goodneſs. He does not aſk what is allowable and pardonable, but what is commendable and praiſe-worthy. He does not aſk whether God will forgive the folly of our lives, the madneſs of our pleaſures, the vanity of our expences, the richneſs of our equipage, and the careleſs conſumption of our time; but he aſks whether God is pleaſed with theſe things, or whether theſe are the appointed ways of gaining his favour. He does not inquire whether it be pardonable to hoard up money, whilſt the widow, the orphan, the ſick, and the priſoner want to be relieved; whilſt the poor labourer, or needy artificer requires his

foſtering bounty, and ſtands in need of ſupport or employment, towards procuring an honeſt maintenance for himſelf and family; but he aſks whether it is the will of God that he ſhould relieve theſe people, and whether he ſhall be called to an account at the laſt day for the neglect of this duty; becauſe it is not his intent to live in ſuch ways as, for ought we know, God may perhaps pardon; but to be diligent in ſuch ways, as we know that God has certainly preſcribed.

YOU ſee two perſons, one of whom is regular in public and private prayer, the other is not. Now the reaſon of this is, not that one has ſtrength and power to obſerve prayer, and the other has not; but the reaſon is, that one intends to pleaſe God in the duties of devotion, and the other has no thought or intention about it.

THE caſe is the ſame in the right or wrong uſe of our time and money. You ſee one perſon throwing away his time in ſleep and idleneſs, in ſuperfluous viſiting and diverſions, and his money in the moſt vain and unreaſonable expences. You ſee another careful of every day, dividing his hours by rules of reaſon and religion, and ſpending much money in works of charity. Now the difference is not owing to this, that one has ſtrength and power to act in ſuch a manner, and the other has not; but it is owing to this, that one intends to pleaſe God in the right uſe of his time, and the other has no intention about it.

I HAVE choſen to explain this matter by appealing to this intention, becauſe it makes the caſe ſo plain, and becauſe every one that has a mind may ſee it in the cleareſt light, and feel it in the ſtrongeſt manner, only by looking into his own heart. For it is as eaſy for every perſon to know whether he intends to pleaſe God in all his actions, as for a ſervant to know whether this be his intention towards his maſter.

HERE therefore let us judge ourſelves ſincerely; let us

not blindly and vainly acquieſce in the common diſorders of our lives, the vanity of our expences, the folly of our diverſions, the pride of our dreſs, and the waſting of our time, fancying that theſe are ſuch imperfections as we fall into through the unavoidable weakneſs and frailty of our nature; neither let us look upon ourſelves as in a ſtate of imperfection, but in a ſtate that wants the firſt and moſt fundamental principle of Chriſtianity, viz. an intent to pleaſe God in all our actions.

THIS doctrine does not ſuppoſe that we have no need of divine grace, or that it is in our power to be perfect. It only ſuppoſes that through the want of a ſincere intention to pleaſe God we fall into ſuch irregularities of life, as by the ordinary means of grace we ſhould have power to avoid, and that we have not the perfection which our preſent ſtate of grace makes us capable of, becauſe we do not ſo much as intend to have it.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE GREAT DANGER AND FOLLY OF NOT INTENDING TO BE AS EMINENT AND EXEMPLARY AS WE CAN IN THE PRACTICE OF ALL CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

ALTHOUGH the goodneſs of God, and his rich mercies in Jeſus Chriſt, are a ſufficient aſſurance to us that he will be merciful to our unavoidable weakneſſes and infirmities, that is, to ſuch failings as are the effects of ignorance or ſurpriſe; yet we have no reaſon to expect the ſame mercy towards thoſe ſins which we live in through a want of intention to avoid them. For inſtance the caſe of a common ſwearer who dies in that guilt, ſeems to have no title to divine mercy; for this reaſon, becauſe it is impoſſible for him to plead any weakneſs or infirmity in his excuſe.

WHY then do we not carry this way of reaſoning to its true extent? Why do we not as much condemn every other error of life that has no more weakneſs to plead in its excuſe than common ſwearing? You perhaps have made no great progreſs in the moſt important Chriſtian virtues, you have ſcarcely gone half way in humility and charity; why therefore do you not preſs theſe things home upon your conſcience? Why do you not think it as dangerous for you to live in ſuch defects as are in your power to amend, as it is dangerous for a common ſwearer to live in the breach of that duty, which it is in his power to obſerve? Is not negligence and a want of a ſincere intention as blameable in one caſe as in another?

YOU perhaps will ſay that all people fall ſhort of the perfection of the Goſpel, and therefore you ſubmit to your failings. But this is ſaying nothing to the purpoſe. For the queſtion is not whether Goſpel perfection can be

fully attained, but whether you come as near it as a ſincere intention and careful diligence can carry you; whether you are not in a much lower ſtate than you might be, if you ſincerely intended, and carefully laboured to advance yourſelf in all Chriſtian virtues.

THE ſalvation of our ſouls is ſet forth in ſcripture as a thing of difficulty, that requires all our diligence, that is to be worked out with fear and trembling. We are told that ſtraight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; that many are called, but few are choſen; and that many will miſs of their ſalvation, who ſeem to have taken *ſome pains* about it, as evidently appears from theſe words, "Strive to enter in at the ſtraight gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter it, and ſhall not be able." Now if ſalvation is only given to thoſe who ſtrive for it, then it is as reaſonable for me to conſider whether my courſe of life be a courſe of ſtriving to obtain it, as to conſider whether I am keeping any of the commandments.

IF my religion is only a formal cold compliance with thoſe modes of worſhip that are in faſhion where I live; if it coſts me no pains or trouble; if it lays me under no rules or reſtraints; if I have no ſober thoughts, nor careful reflections about it, is it not great weakneſs to think that I am ſtriving to enter in at the ſtraight gate? If I am ſeeking every thing that can delight my ſenſes, or regale my appetite; ſpending my time and fortune ſolely in pleaſures, in diverſions, and worldly enjoyments; a ſtranger to faſting, prayer, and mortification, how can it be ſaid that I am working out my ſalvation with fear and trembling? And yet if the way to heaven is narrow, and none can walk in it but thoſe who ſtrive, is it not neceſſary for me to conſider whether the way I am in be narrow enough, or the labour I take be ſufficient?

THE ſum of the matter is this: from the above mentioned, and many other paſſages in ſcripture, it ſeems plain that our ſalvation depends upon the *ſincerity*, and

perfection of our endeavours to obtain it. Weak and *imperfect* men ſhall, notwithſtanding their frailties and defects, be received as having pleaſed God, if they have done their utmoſt to pleaſe him.

THE rewards of charity, piety, and humility, will be given to thoſe, whoſe lives have been a careful labour to exerciſe theſe virtues in as high a degree as they could. We cannot offer to God the ſervice of angels; we cannot obey him as man in a ſtate of perfection could; but fallen men can do their beſt, and this is the perfection that is required of us. But if we ſtop ſhort of this, for ought we know, we ſtop ſhort of the mercy of God, and leave ourſelves nothing to plead from the terms of the goſpel; for God has there made no promiſes of mercy to the ſlothful and negligent. It is for this reaſon that we are exhorted to work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling, becauſe unleſs our hearts and paſſions are eagerly bent upon the work of our ſalvation; unleſs holy fears animate our endeavours, and keep our conſciences ſtrict and tender about every part of our duty, conſtantly examining how we live, and how fit we are to die, we ſhall in all probability fall into a ſtate of negligence, and be ſatisfied with ſuch a courſe of life, as will never carry us to the rewards of heaven.

NOW what has been ſaid is not intended to poſſeſs people's minds with a ſcrupulous anxiety and diſcontent in the ſervice of God, but to fill them with a juſt fear of living in ſloth and idleneſs, and in the neglect of ſuch virtues as they will want at the day of judgment. It is only deſiring them to be as apprehenſive of their ſtate, as humble in the opinion of themſelves, and as fearful of falling ſhort of happineſs, as the great apoſtle St. Paul was, when he wrote thus to the Philippians. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but this one thing I do, forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus."

And then he adds, "let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded."

Now if the apoſtle thought it neceſſary for thoſe who were in his ſtate of perfection to be thus minded, ſurely it is much more neceſſary for us to be like minded; for us who are born in the dregs of time, and live in that alarming period when wickedneſs and impiety, like ſome dreadful contagion, ſeem to have infected the whole globe. Oh! let us then be in earneſt, and ſtrive after ſuch degrees of a holy and divine life as we have not yet attained. Let not any one conſider how much will make his preſent life eaſy, but how much will make him eaſy at the hour of death.

We ſee in worldly matters what a torment ſelf condemnation is, and how hardly a man is able to forgive himſelf when he has fallen into calamity or diſgrace purely by his own folly. How terrible then the pain of that ſelf condemnation will be, when a man ſhall find himſelf in the miſeries of death under the ſeverities of a ſelf condemning conſcience, and charging all his diſtreſs upon the folly and madneſs of his own conduct in oppoſition to all the doctrines and precepts of the goſpel, and to all the inſtructions, calls, and warnings both of God and man.

Let us approach the death-bed of a penitent, and attend to his laſt reflections on the life he is about to reſign. A wealthy tradeſman who lately died in his thirty-fifth year addreſſed his ſurrounding friends nearly in the following terms, "I ſee, ſays he, my friends, the tender concern you have for me by the grief that appears in your countenances. You think how melancholy a caſe it is, for a young man in ſuch flouriſhing buſineſs to be delivered up to death; and perhaps had I viſited any of you in my condition, I ſhould have had the ſame thoughts. But theſe things are now ſunk into ſuch mere *nothings*, that I have no name little enough to call them by. For in a few days or hours I am to find myſelf either for ever happy in the favour of God, or eternally

miſerable. Can any words then ſufficiently expreſs the littleneſs of every thing elſe? Is there any dream ſo fatal as the dream of life? Is there any folly like the folly of our mortal ſtate, which is too wiſe and buſy to be at leiſure for theſe reflections?

When we conſider death as a miſery, we only think of it as a miſerable ſeparation from the enjoyments of this life. We ſeldom mourn over an old man who dies rich; but we lament the young who are taken away in the progreſs of their fortune.

You yourſelves look upon me with pity, not becauſe I am going unprepared to meet the Judge of quick and dead, but becauſe I am to leave a proſperous trade in the flower of my life. And yet what folly can be greater this? for what is there miſerable or dreadful in death but the conſequences of it?

Feasts, and buſineſs, and pleaſures, and enjoyments, ſeem great things to us, whilſt we think of nothing elſe; but as ſoon as we add death to them, they all ſink into equal littleneſs, and the ſoul that is ſeparated from the body no more laments the loſs of buſineſs than the loſing of a feaſt. When you are as near death as I am, you will know that all the different ſtates of life, whether of youth, or age, riches, or poverty, greatneſs, or meanneſs, ſignify no more to you, than whether you die in a poor or ſtately apartment. The greatneſs of things which follow death, makes all that goes before it ſink into nothing.

But, my friends, how am I ſurpriſed that I have not always had theſe thoughts! How ſtrange it is that a little health, or worldly buſineſs, ſhould render us ſo regardleſs of theſe great things which are coming ſo faſt upon us! What numbers of ſouls there are in my condition at this very time ſurpriſed with a ſummons to the other world, ſome taken from their buſineſs, others from their ſports and pleaſures; ſome from gaming-tables,

others from their own fire-ſides; and all ſeized at an hour when they thought nothing of it; frightened at the approach of death; confounded at the vanity of all their labours, deſigns and projects; aſtoniſhed at the folly of their paſt lives, and not knowing which way to turn their thoughts to find any comfort.

Oh my friends! bleſs God that you are not of this number; that you have time and ſtrength to employ yourſelves in ſuch works of piety, as may bring you peace at the laſt. Had I now a thouſand worlds I would give them all for one year more, that I might preſent unto God one year of devotion and good works, ſuch as I never before ſo much as intended.

Perhaps when you conſider that I have lived free from ſcandal and debauchery, and in the communion of the Church, you wonder to ſee me ſo full of remorſe and ſelf condemnation. But alas! what a poor thing it is to have lived only free from murder, theft, and adultery. You know indeed that I have never been reckoned a ſot, but you are at the ſame time witneſſes, and have been frequently the companions of, my intemperance, ſenſuality, and indulgence.

How I am abaſhed and confounded when I reflect that, in the common buſineſs of life, I have done every thing by the moſt prudent rules, and methods, that worldly wiſdom could ſuggeſt, and have ſtudied all the ways and means of being a gainer by all that I undertook; when I conſider how regular and wiſe I have been in ſmall matters, that are paſſed away like a dream, and how ſtupid and ſenſeleſs I have lived without any reflection, without any rule, in things of ſuch eternal moment, as no heart can ſufficiently conceive! What pain do you think a man muſt feel, when his conſcience lays all this folly to his charge! Had I only my frailties and imperfections to lament at this time, I ſhould lie here humbly truſting in the mercies of God. But alas! how can I call a general diſregard and thorough neglect of all religious

improvement a frailty and imperfection, when it was as much in my power to have been exact, careful and diligent in a courſe of piety, as in the buſineſs of my trade.

Oh my friends! a careleſs life, unconcerned and inattentive to the duties of religion, is ſo deſtitute of all excuſe, ſo unworthy of the mercy of God, ſo diſgraceful to the ſenſe and reaſon of our minds, that I can hardly conceive a greater puniſhment than for a man to be thrown into the ſtate that I am in, and to reflect upon it!"

This truly penitent man would have proceeded farther, but his mouth was cloſed by a convulſion, which never ſuffered him to finiſh his addreſs.

Now if every reader, or hearer, would imagine this perſon to have been ſome particular acquaintance, or relation of his own, and fancy that he ſaw and heard every thing which is here deſcribed; that he ſtood by the bed-ſide when his poor friend lay in ſuch diſtreſs and agony, it would in all probability teach him ſuch wiſdom as never entered into his heart before. If, in addition to this, he would conſider how often he himſelf might have been ſurpriſed in the ſame ſtate of negligence, and made an example to the reſt of the world, this double reflection both upon the diſtreſs of his friend and the goodneſs of God, who has preſerved him from it, would in all likelihood ſoften his heart into holy diſpoſitions, and make him turn the remainder of his life into a regular courſe of piety.

This therefore being ſo uſeful a meditation, I ſhall leave the Reader, as I hope, ſeriouſly engaged in it.

CHAPTER IV.

WE CAN PLEASE GOD IN NO STATE OF LIFE, BUT BY INTENDING AND DEVOTING IT TO HIS HONOUR AND GLORY.

HAVING in the firſt chapter ſtated the general nature of devotion, and ſhewn that it implies not any form of prayer, but a certain form of life that is offered to God, not at any particular times or places, but every where and in every thing; I ſhall now deſcend to ſome particulars, and ſhew how we are to devote our labour and employments, our time and fortune unto God.

As a good Chriſtian ſhould conſider every place as holy, becauſe God is there; ſo he ſhould look upon every part of his life as a matter of holineſs, becauſe it is to be offered unto God.

THE profeſſion of a clergyman is a holy profeſſion, becauſe it is a miniſtration in holy things, an attendance at the altar. Clergymen muſt live wholly unto God in one particular way, that is in the exerciſe of holy offices, in the miniſtration of prayers and ſacraments, and a zealous diſtribution of ſpiritual goods. But men of other employments are, in their particular ways, as much obliged to act as the ſervants of God, and live wholly unto him in their ſeveral callings. And this is the only difference between clergymen and people of other profeſſions. As there is but one God and Father of us all, whoſe glory gives light and life to every thing that lives; whoſe preſence fills all places; whoſe power ſupports all beings; whoſe providence governs all events; ſo all creatures, whether in heaven or on earth, whether they be thrones or principalities, men or angels, muſt, with one ſpirit, live wholly to the praiſe and glory of this one God and Father of us all.

WHATEVER therefore we do, we ought to do it with a deſign of pleaſing God. The ſame ſtate and temper of mind, which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, muſt alſo make our labour or employments a proper offering unto him. If a man labours to be rich, and purſues his buſineſs that he may raiſe himſelf to a ſtate of pride and glory in the world, he is no longer ſerving God in his employment; he is acting under maſters, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he who gives alms that he may be ſeen, or prays that he may be heard of men.

MOST of the employments of life are in their own nature lawful; and all thoſe which are ſo, may be made a ſubſtantial part of our duty to God, if we engage in them only ſo far, and for ſuch ends as are ſuitable for beings that are to live *above* the world all the time they live *in* it. This is the only meaſure of our application to any worldly buſineſs; let it be what it will, or where it will, it muſt have no more of our hands, our hearts, or our time, than is conſiſtent with an active and daily preparation of ourſelves for another life.

NOW he that does not look at the things of this life in this degree of littleneſs, cannot be ſaid either to feel, or believe the greateſt truths of Chriſtianity. For if he thinks any thing great or important in human buſineſs compared with the things of eternity, can he properly be ſaid to feel or believe thoſe ſcriptures, which repreſent this life, and all its concerns, as bubbles, vapours, dreams, and ſhadows?

THE huſbandman, for inſtance, who tilleth the ground is employed in an honeſt labour, that is neceſſary in life, and very capable of being made an acceptable ſervice unto God; but if he labours not to ſerve any reaſonable ends of life, but in order to gain more money to ſpend at an ale-houſe, thereby depriving his wife and children of their neceſſary ſupport and maintenance, the honeſty of his employment is loſt as to him, and his labour becomes a wickedneſs.

A TRADESMAN may juſtly think it is agreeable to the will of God for him to ſell ſuch things as are innocent in life, ſuch as help both himſelf and others to a reaſonable ſupport, and enable them to aſſiſt thoſe who want to be aſſiſted. But if inſtead of this he trades only with regard to himſelf, without any other rule than that of his own *temper*; if it be his chief end to grow rich, that he may live in ſhew and indulgence, and be able to retire from buſineſs to a life of idleneſs and luxury, his trade, as to him, loſes all its innocency, and ſo far from being an acceptable ſervice to God, is only a more plauſible courſe of covetouſneſs, ſelf-love and ambition. Such a one lives no more to the glory of God, than he who plays and games for the ſame ends.

A CERTAIN tradeſman has purſued his buſineſs above thirty years in the greateſt city of the kingdom; he has been ſo many years conſtantly increaſing his trade and fortune. Every hour of the day with him is an hour of buſineſs; and though he eats and drinks very heartily, yet every meal is diſpatched in a hurry, nor can he ſpare time to ſay grace. He eats every day at the tavern, but has no leiſure to be there till nine o'clock. He does buſineſs all the time he is riſing, and has ſettled ſeveral matters before he can get to his compting-room. His prayers are a ſhort ejaculation or two, which he never miſſes in ſtormy tempeſtuous weather, becauſe he has always ſomething expoſed to the dangers of the ſea.

HE will tell you with great pleaſure, that he has been in this hurry for ſo many years, that it muſt have killed him long ago, if it had not been a rule with him to get out of the town every ſaturday, and make the ſunday a day of quiet and good refreſhment in the country. He is now ſo rich that he would leave off buſineſs, and amuſe his old age with building and furniſhing a fine houſe, but that he is afraid he ſhould grow melancholy, if he was to quit his uſual occupations. If thoughts of religion happen at any time to ſteal into his head, he contents himſelf with thinking that he never was a friend to hereticks

and infidels; that he always has been civil to the miniſter of the pariſh, and very often given ſomething to charitable inſtitutions.

Now this way of life is at ſuch a diſtance from all the doctrines and diſcipline of Chriſtianity, that no one can live in it through ignorance or frailty. The perſon alluded to can no more imagine that he is born again of the ſpirit; that he is in Chriſt a new creature; that he lives here a ſtranger and pilgrim, ſetting his affections on things above, and laying up treaſures in heaven; he can no more imagine this, than he can think that he has been all his life an apoſtle, working miracles and preaching the goſpel.

It is certain that people do not live thus becauſe they cannot ſupport themſelves with leſs care and application to buſineſs; but they live thus becauſe they want to grow rich, and maintain their families in ſuch faſhion, and ſuch degrees of finery, as a reaſonable Chriſtian life has no occaſion for. Take away this worldly temper, and then people of all trades will find themſelves at leiſure to live every day like Chriſtians; to be careful of every duty of the goſpel; to live in a viſible courſe of religion, and be every day ſtrict obſervers both of private and public prayer. And nothing can be right in buſineſs that is not under theſe rules.

The apoſtle commands ſervants "to be obedient to their maſters in ſingleneſs of heart as unto Chriſt, doing the will of God from the heart." This paſſage ſufficiently ſhews that all Chriſtians are to live wholly unto God in every ſtate and condition, doing the work of their common calling in ſuch a manner and for ſuch ends as to make it a part of their devotion, or ſervice to God. For the Son of God has redeemed us for this only purpoſe, that we ſhould by a life of piety live to the glory of God in every rank, and every ſtate of life. Without this rule the moſt lawful employments become a ſinful ſtate of life. Take away this from a clergyman, and his

holy profeſſion ſerves only to expoſe him to a greater condemnation. Take away this from a tradeſman, and his warehouſes are but ſo many dens of greedineſs and filthy lucre. Take away this from the gentleman, and the courſe of his life becomes a courſe of ſenſuality, pride and vanity. Take away this from our tables, and all falls into gluttony and drunkenneſs. Take away this meaſure from our dreſs and habits, and all is turned into ſuch paint, glitter and ridiculous ornaments, as are a real ſhame to the wearer. Take away this from our diverſions, and you will find no ſports too ſilly, nor any entertainments too vain and corrupt, to be the pleaſures of Chriſtians.

If therefore we deſire to live unto God, we muſt be looking unto him in all our actions, and doing every thing as his ſervants, always worſhipping him, though not with our lips, yet with the thankfulneſs of our hearts. We muſt not only ſend up petitions now and then to heaven, but muſt go through all our worldly buſineſs with new hearts and new minds, and by this means turn an earthly life into a preparation for a life of greatneſs and glory in the kingdom of heaven.

Enough I hope has been ſaid to ſhew you the neceſſity of introducing religion into all our actions; yet allow me to make one more remark. Eating is one of the loweſt actions of our lives; it is common to us with mere animals; but we ſee that the piety of all former ages of the world has turned this action of animal life into a piety to God, by making every meal begin and end with devotion, and we ſtill ſee ſome remains of this cuſtom in Chriſtian families. But indeed it is now generally ſo obſerved as to look more like a mockery on devotion, than any ſolemn application of the mind unto God. In one houſe you perhaps ſee the head of the family half riſing from his ſeat; another will proceed ſo far as to appear to ſay ſomething; but to ſuch a paſs are we come, that we can hardly bear with him who ſeems to perform this duty with any degree of ſerioufneſs,

and look upon it as a ſign of a fanatical temper, if a man has not done as ſoon as he begins.

I WOULD not be thought to plead for the neceſſity of long prayers at ſuch times; but if every head of a family was, at the return of every meal, to oblige himſelf to make a ſhort, but ſolemn, *adoration* of God in ſuch a decent manner as becomes a devout mind, it would be productive of the moſt important advantages.

AND if, in theſe days of general corruption, this part of devotion is fallen into a mock ceremony, it muſt be imputed to this cauſe, that ſenſuality and intemperance have gotten too great power over us, to ſuffer us to add any devotion to our meals. But thus much muſt be ſaid, that when we are as pious as Jews and heathens of all ages have been, we ſhall think it proper to pray at the beginning and end of our meals.

CHAPTER V.

PERSONS THAT ARE FREE FROM THE NECESSITIES OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENTS, ARE TO CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS DEVOTED TO GOD IN A HIGHER DEGREE.

A GREAT part of the world are free from the neceſſities of labour, and have their time and fortune in their own diſpoſal. But as no one is to live in his *employment* according to his own humour, or for ſuch ends as pleaſe his own fancy, but to do all his buſineſs in ſuch a manner, as to make it a ſervice unto God; ſo thoſe who have no particular employment, are ſo far from being left at greater liberty to live to themſelves, to purſue their own humour, and ſpend their time and fortune as they pleaſe, that they are under greater obligations of living wholly unto God in all their actions.

THE freedom of their ſituation lays them under a greater neceſſity of always chuſing and doing the beſt things. They are thoſe of whom much will be required, becauſe much is given unto them. A ſlave can only live unto God in one particular way, that is by a religious patience and ſubmiſſion in his ſtate of ſlavery; but all ways of holy living, all kinds of virtue, lie open to thoſe who are maſters of themſelves, their time and their fortune.

IT is therefore the duty of ſuch perſons to make a wiſe uſe of their liberty, to devote themſelves to every ſpecies of virtue, to aſpire after every thing that is holy and pious, to endeavour to be eminent in all good works, and to pleaſe God in the higheſt and moſt perfect manner.

YOU are no labourer nor tradeſman, you are neither merchant nor ſoldier; conſider yourſelf then as placed in

a ſtate, in ſome degree like that of good angels, who are ſent into the world as miniſtering ſpirits for the general good of mankind, to aſſiſt, protect and miniſter for thoſe who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation. And as God has given you five talents; as he has placed you above the neceſſities of life; as he has left you in the hands of yourſelf, in the happy liberty of chuſing the moſt exalted ways of virtue; as he has enriched you with many gifts of fortune, and left you nothing to do but to make the beſt uſe of a variety of bleſſings, to make the moſt of a ſhort life, to ſtudy your own perfection, the honour of God and the good of your neighbour, it is your duty ſo to conduct yourſelf, that when, at the appointed time, mankind are to be rewarded for their labours by the great Judge of the quick and the dead, you may be received with a "well done good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Now this piety, wiſdom, and devotion is either to go through every part of life, and extend to the uſe of every thing, or it is to go through no part of life. If we might forget ourſelves, or forget God; if we might diſregard our reaſon, and live by humour and fancy in any thing, or at any time or place, it would be as lawful to do the ſame in every thing, at every time and in every place. If therefore ſome people fancy that they muſt live by rule on ſunday, but may ſpend other days by chance; that they muſt have ſome times of prayer, but may waſte the reſt of their time as they pleaſe; that they muſt give ſome money in charity, but may ſquander and diſſipate the reſt as they have a mind; ſuch people have not enough conſidered the nature of religion, or the true reaſons of piety.

If it is our glory and happineſs to have a rational nature that is capable of imitating the divine nature, then it muſt be our glory and happineſs to improve our reaſon, to act up to the excellency of our rational nature, and to imitate God in all our actions to the utmoſt of our power.

IT is an immutable law of God, that all rational beings ſhould act reaſonably in all their actions, on all occaſions; not in the uſe of ſome particular thing, but in the uſe of all things and at all times. This is a law that is as unchangeable as God, and can no more ceaſe to be, than God can ceaſe to be a God of wiſdom and order. When therefore you are guilty of any folly or extravagance, or indulge a vain temper, do not conſider it as a ſmall matter, becauſe it may ſeem ſo, if compared with ſome other ſins, but conſider that all unreaſonable ways are contrary to the nature of all rational beings, whether men or angels, neither of which can be any longer agreeable to God, than whilſt they act according to the reaſon and excellency of their nature.

THE infirmities of our nature make ſuch food and raiment neceſſary for us as angels do not want, but then it is in ſtrictneſs no more allowable for us to turn theſe neceſſities into extravagant follies, and indulge ourſelves in all the luxury of food, or the exceſſive vanities of dreſs, than it is allowable for angels to act below the dignity of their proper ſtate.

THESE are not ſpeculative flights, nor imaginary notions, but are plain and undeniable laws founded in the nature of rational beings, who, as ſuch, are obliged to live by reaſon, and glorify God by a continual right uſe of their ſeveral talents and faculties. Our bleſſed Saviour has plainly turned our thoughts this way, by making this petition a conſtant part of all our prayers, "Thy will be done as it is in heaven." A plain proof that the obedience of men is to imitate the obedience of angels, and that rational beings are to live like rational beings, not looking unto the ways of the world, but looking up unto God, and to think what wiſdom and holineſs is fit to prepare them for a ſtate of glory. You muſt examine yourſelf by the ſpirit of Chriſt; you muſt think how departed ſouls would live, if they were again to act the ſhort part of human life; you muſt think what degrees

of wiſdom and holineſs you will wiſh for when you are leaving the world.

Now all this is not over-ſtraining the matter, nor propoſing to ourſelves any needleſs perfection: it is but barely complying with the apoſtle's advice, when he ſays, "Finally, brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things." For no one can come near the doctrine of this paſſage but he who propoſes to himſelf to do every thing in this life as a ſervant of God, and to make the wiſdom and holineſs of the goſpel the rule and meaſure of his deſiring and uſing every gift of God.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE IMPRUDENT USE OF A FORTUNE CORRUPTS THE BEST PRINCIPLES OF THE MIND, AND FILLS THE HEART WITH POOR AND RIDICULOUS PASSIONS THROUGH THE WHOLE COURSE OF LIFE.

IT has been already obſerved, that a prudent and religious care is to be uſed in the manner of ſpending our money and eſtate, becauſe the manner of ſpending them makes ſo great a part of common life, and is ſo much the buſineſs of every day, that according as we are wiſe or prudent in this reſpect, the whole courſe of our lives will be rendered either very wiſe or very full of folly.

PERSONS who are well affected to religion, who receive inſtructions of piety with pleaſure and ſatisfaction, often wonder how it comes to paſs that they make no greater progreſs in the religion which they ſo much admire. Now the reaſon of it is this: religion lives only in their heads, but ſomething elſe has poſſeſſion of their hearts, and therefore they continue, from year to year, mere admirers and praiſers of piety, without ever coming up to the reality and perfection of its precepts.

IF it be aſked why religion does not get poſſeſſion of their hearts, the reaſon is not becauſe they live in groſs ſins or debaucheries (for their regard for religion preſerves them from ſuch diſorders), but becauſe their hearts are perverted, and continually kept in a wrong ſtate, by the indiſcreet uſe of ſuch things as are lawful to be uſed. In this number their fortunes are properly reckoned, and therefore it never enters into their heads to imagine any great danger from the enjoyment of them. They never reflect that there is a vain and imprudent uſe of them, which though it does not deſtroy like groſs ſins, yet ſo

diſorders the heart, and ſupports it in ſuch ſenſuality and dullneſs, ſuch pride and vanity, as to make it incapable of receiving the life and ſpirit of piety.

WHAT is more innocent than reſt and retirement? and yet what more dangerous than ſloth and idleneſs? What is more lawful and neceſſary than eating and drinking? and yet what is more deſtructive of all virtue; what is more fruitful of all vice than ſenſuality and indulgence? How lawful and praiſe-worthy is the care of a family? and yet how certainly are many people rendered incapable of all virtue by a worldly and ſolicitous temper? Now it is for want of religious exactneſs in the uſe of theſe innocent and lawful things, that religion cannot get poſſeſſion of our hearts; and it is in the right and prudent management of ourſelves, as to theſe things, that the art of holy living chiefly conſiſts. Groſs ſins are plainly ſeen and eaſily avoided by perſons who profeſs religion. But the indiſcreet and dangerous uſe of innocent and lawful things, as it does not ſhock and offend our conſcience, ſo it is too apt to eſcape our obſervation.

I DO not mean to inſinuate that a perſon of fortune is to become one of the many poor who are relieved out of his income. The ſtate of the world in theſe days, and the ſupport of ſociety as at preſent eſtabliſhed, will not only permit, but even require, that ſome perſons ſhould allow themſelves the elegancies and delights of life, by furniſhing which multitudes of poor families are ſubſiſted with more comfort and advantage to themſelves, and with greater ſafety to the public than they otherwiſe could be. But I would earneſtly recommend it to every perſon ſo to regulate his domeſtic affairs, as to be able to ſet aſide a certain portion of his income for charitable purpoſes.

IF people would ſubmit to a reaſonable and regular arrangement of their fortunes, and lay aſide the ſilly pride of endeavouring to make an appearance like thoſe who have double their means, and which we muſt con-

feſs in the words of Solomon "is but vanity and vexation of ſpirit;" I ſay, if people would be content to appear in their proper characters, every one would be ſufficiently rich to be comfortable, and to do his duty in his allotted ſtation.

A GENTLEMAN who ſpends all his eſtate in ſports, and a woman who lays out all her fortune upon herſelf, can hardly be perſuaded that the ſpirit of religion cannot ſubſiſt in ſuch ways of life. Theſe perſons, as it has been obſerved, may live free from debaucheries; they may be friends to religion ſo far as to praiſe and ſpeak well of it, and admire it in their imaginations, but it cannot govern their hearts till they change their way of life, and ſuffer it to give laws to the uſe and ſpending of their eſtates. A woman who loves to dreſs, and thinks no expence too great to beſtow upon the adorning of her perſon, cannot ſtop there; for that temper draws a thouſand other follies along with it, and will render the whole courſe of her life, her buſineſs, her converſation, her hopes, her fears, her taſte, her pleaſures, and diverſions all ſuitable to it.

IT is this falſe judgment and imprudent uſe of money that fills the lives of many females with ſuch a variety of indiſcretions, and keeps them from thinking of what is right, wiſe, and pious in every part of their conduct. If you ſee them running, night after night, the ſame round of folly and diſſipation, flying from one diverſion to another with a perpetual thirſt after amuſement, delighted with plays and romances, balls and aſſemblies, a love of news and ſcandal, eaſily flattered, and ſoon affronted, and ſlaves to every paſſion in its turn; it is becauſe they have purchaſed theſe paſſions with the yearly revenue of their fortunes.

MORE people are kept from a true ſenſe and taſte of religion by a *regular kind* of ſenſuality and indulgence, than by *groſs drunkenneſs*. More men live regardleſs of the great duties of piety through a too great concern for worldly goods, than through injuſtice. One man would

perhaps be devout if he was not ſo great a virtuoſo; another is deaf to all the motives of piety by indulging an idle ſlothful temper. Could you cure this man of his great curioſity and inquiſitive temper, or that of his inſatiable thirſt after learning, you need do no more to make them both become men of great piety. If this woman could be induced to make fewer viſits, or that would not be always indulging her propenſity to talk, they would neither of them find it half ſo difficult to become religious.

All theſe things are only little when compared with great ſins; but though they are ſmall in that reſpect, yet they are great faults as they are impediments and hindrances to a pious life. For as conſideration is the only eye of the ſoul; as the truths of religion can be ſeen by nothing elſe, ſo whatever raiſes a levity of mind, and trifling ſpirit, renders the ſoul incapable of ſeeing, apprehending and reliſhing the doctrines of piety. Would we therefore make a real progreſs in religion, we muſt not only abhor groſs and notorious ſins, but we muſt regulate the innocent and lawful parts of our behaviour, and put the moſt common and allowed actions of life under the rules of diſcretion and piety.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE WISE AND PIOUS USE OF A FORTUNE CARRIETH US TO GREAT PERFECTION IN ALL THE VIRTUES OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

ANY one pious regularity of any one part of our life is of great advantage, not only on its own account, but as it uſes us to live by rule, and think of the government of ourſelves. A man of buſineſs, who has brought any one part of his affairs under certain rules, is in a fair way to take care of the reſt: and in like manner he who hath brought any one part of his life under the rules of religion, may thence be taught to extend the ſame order and regularity into other parts of his life.

IF any one is ſo wiſe as to think his time too precious to be diſpoſed of by chance, and left to be devoured by any thing that falls in his way; if he lays himſelf under the neceſſity of obſerving how every day goes through his hands, and obliges himſelf to a certain order of time in his buſineſs, his retirements and his devotions, it is hardly to be imagined how ſoon ſuch a conduct will reform, improve, and perfect the whole courſe of his life. A rule that relates to the ſmalleſt part of our life is of great benefit to us, merely as it is a rule. For as the proverb ſaith, he that hath begun well has half done; ſo he that hath begun to live by rule, has gone a great way towards the perfection of his own life.

BY rule muſt here be conſtantly underſtood a religious rule, obſerved upon a principle of duty to God. For if a man ſhould oblige himſelf to be temperate in his meals, only in regard to his ſtomach; to abſtain from drinking only to avoid the head-ach; or be moderate in his ſleep through fear of a lethargy, he might be exact in theſe rules without being at all the better man for them. But

when he is moderate and regular in any of theſe things out of a ſenſe of chriſtian ſobriety and ſelf-denial, that he may offer unto God a more reaſonable and holy life, then it is that the ſmalleſt rule of this kind is naturally the beginning of great piety.

If any one would oblige himſelf on the Lord's day to abſtain from many innocent and lawful things, as travelling, unneceſſary viſiting, and diſcourſing upon worldly matters, as trade, news, and the like; if he would devote that day, beſides the public worſhip, to greater retirement, reading, devotion, inſtruction, and works of charity; though it may ſeem a needleſs nicety to require a man to abſtain from ſuch things as may be done without ſin, yet whoever would try the benefit of ſo little a rule would probably find ſuch a change made in his heart, and ſuch piety raiſed in his mind, as he was an entire ſtranger to before. It would be eaſy to ſhew in many other inſtances how little and ſmall matters are the ſteps, and natural beginnings of great perfection.

But the two things which of all others want to be under a ſtrict rule, and which are the greateſt bleſſings both to ourſelves and to our neighbours, when they are rightly uſed, are our time and money. They furniſh us with continual means and opportunities of doing good, and he that is happy in the religious care and diſpoſal of them has already aſcended ſeveral ſteps upon the ladder of Chriſtian perfection.

We ought to conſider our fortune as the gift of God, and be anxious to make a right uſe of it; and for this purpoſe we ought daily to read the holy ſcriptures, eſpecially the New Teſtament, to obſerve its precepts with a watchful attention, conſtantly caſting an eye upon ourſelves, and trying ourſelves by every doctrine which it contains. We ought to be active in ſeizing every opportunity of doing good; to protect the innocent; to relieve the poor, and to ſuccour the diſtreſſed in whatever ſituation they are found.

OFTEN do we hear it ſaid that the ingratitude and depravity of the world are now ſo great that they harden people's hearts, and deter them from doing many kind actions, which otherwiſe they would have performed. Alas! I fear this obſervation is too true. But ſurely as Chriſtians we ought not to allow ſuch conſiderations to damp our ardour in good works. A far more ſublime virtue ſhould animate our hearts, a virtue that requires not the thanks of man for its reward.

WE ſhould moreover on theſe occaſions, when we are accuſing our fellow creatures of ingratitude to ſuch frail beings as we are, carefully ſearch out our own hearts and conſciences, and aſk if we ourſelves are ſufficiently grateful for all the innumerable bleſſings which are daily and hourly ſhowered upon us by our gracious and ever merciful Creator. We ſhould remember "to caſt out firſt the *beam* out of our own eye, that we may ſee clearly to pull out the *mote* that is in our brother's eye."

THERE is a ſpecies of charity which is frequently the ſubject of much debate, and therefore deſerves to be noticed upon this occaſion: I mean that of giving alms to common beggars. If indeed we conſider the benevolent proviſion for the poor of this country in their reſpective pariſhes, there ſeems at firſt ſight to be great reaſon on the ſide of thoſe who oppoſe the relief of ſuch perſons. It would be highly improper however to withhold entirely our charitable aſſiſtance from people of this deſcription, who are old, or ſick, or labour under any other infirmity. We ſhould hear their complaints with tenderneſs, and give them ſome little proof of our kindneſs; and not reject them, as the manner of ſome is, with hard or reproachful language, unleſs we know them to be impoſtors.

IF a poor traveller tells me that he has neither ſtrength, nor food, nor money left, I could never reply, that I would not relieve him becauſe he might be a cheat, or becauſe I did not know him; but I would relieve him

becauſe he was a ſtranger, and unknown to me. For it is a noble part of charity to be kind and tender to thoſe whom we never ſaw before, or may never ſee again in this life. "I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in," ſaith our bleſſed Lord and Saviour; but who can perform this duty, that will not relieve perſons who are unknown to them?

It may be ſaid that we often give alms to perſons who do not deſerve them. But what then? Is not this the very method of divine goodneſs? Does not God make his ſun to riſe upon the evil and upon the good? Is not this the very goodneſs recommended in ſcripture, that by imitating it we may become children of our Father which is in heaven, who ſendeth rain upon the juſt and upon the unjuſt? And ſhall I withhold a little money or food from my fellow creature for fear he ſhould not be good enough to receive it of me? Do I beg of God to deal with me, not according to my merit, but according to his goodneſs; and ſhall I be ſo abſurd as to withhold my charity from a poor brother, becauſe he may not deſerve it? Shall I uſe a meaſure towards him, which I pray God never to uſe towards me?

Besides where has the ſcripture made merit the rule or meaſure of our charity? On the contrary the ſcripture ſaith, "if thy enemy hunger, feed him; and if he thirſt, give him drink." If I am to love, and do good to, my worſt enemies; if I am to be charitable to them notwithſtanding all their ſpite and malice; if I am not to withhold my charity from ſuch bad people, and who are at the ſame time enemies, ſurely I am not to deny alms to poor beggars, whom I neither know to be bad people, nor any way my enemies.

You will ſay perhaps that by this means I encourage people to be beggars. But the ſame objection may be made againſt moſt kind of charities, for they may encourage people to depend upon them. The ſame may be ſaid againſt forgiving our enemies, for it may encou-

rage people to do us hurt. The ſame may be ſaid even againſt the goodneſs of God, that by pouring his bleſſings on the evil and on the good, on the juſt and on the unjuſt, evil and unjuſt men are encouraged in their wicked ways. But when the love of God dwelleth in you, and hath enlarged your heart, and filled it with mercy and compaſſion, you will make no more ſuch objections as theſe.

When you are at any time turning away the poor, the old, the ſick, the helpleſs traveller, the lame, or the blind, aſk yourſelf this queſtion: "Do I ſincerely wiſh and deſire that God would be pleaſed to make theſe poor creatures happy, and that they may be fellow heirs with me of eternal glory?" Now if you ſearch into your ſoul, you will find that there is none of theſe convictions there; that you are wiſhing nothing of this; for it is impoſſible for any one heartily to wiſh a poor wretched creature ſo great a happineſs, and yet not to have a heart to give him a ſmall alms.

On this account, the truly good man, as far as he is able, gives to all, becauſe he prays to God to forgive all, and cannot refuſe an alms to thoſe whom he prays to God to bleſs, and whom he wiſhes to be partakers of eternal glory; but is glad to ſhew ſome degree of love to ſuch as he hopes will be the objects of the infinite love of God. And if, as our Saviour has aſſured us, it be more bleſſed to give than to receive, we ought to look upon thoſe who aſk our alms as ſo many friends and benefactors, who come to do us greater good than they can receive; who come to exalt our virtue, and to be witneſſes of our charity; to be monuments of our love; to be our advocates with God; to appear for us at the day of judgment, and to help us to a bleſſedneſs far greater than our alms can beſtow on them.

This is the ſpirit, and this ought to be the life of a truly devout Chriſtian, who hopes to ſtand amongſt the ſervants of God, and be glorious amongſt thoſe who have fought the good fight, and finiſhed their courſe with joy.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHEWING HOW GREAT DEVOTION FILLS OUR LIVES WITH THE GREATEST PEACE AND HAPPINESS THAT CAN BE ENJOYED IN THIS WORLD.

SOME people will perhaps object that all these rules of holy living unto God in all that we do are too great a restraint upon human life; and that by depriving ourselves of so many seemingly innocent pleasures, we shall render it dull, uneasy and melancholy.

Now to this it may be answered: First, that these rules are prescribed for, and will certainly procure a quite contrary end; that instead of making our lives dull and melancholy, they will render them full of content and satisfaction; that by these rules we only change the childish gratification of our vain and sickly passions for the solid enjoyment and real happiness of a sound mind.

SECONDLY, that as there is no foundation for comfort in the enjoyments of life, but in the assurance that a wise and good God governeth the world, so the more we depend upon God in every thing, the more we apply to him in every place, the more we look up to him in all our actions, the more we conform to his will, the more we act according to his wisdom, and imitate his goodness, by so much more do we heighten and increase all that is happy and comfortable in human life.

THIRDLY, he that is endeavouring to subdue and root out of his mind all those passions of pride, envy, and ambition, which religion opposes, is doing more to make himself happy even in this life, than he who is contriving means to indulge them. For these passions are the causes of all the disputes and vexations of human life; they are

the dropſies, and fevers of our minds, vexing them with falſe appetites and reſtleſs craving after ſuch things as we do not want, and ſpoiling our taſte for thoſe things which are our proper food.

Do but imagine that you have ſeen a man who propoſed reaſon as the rule of all his actions, and had no deſires but after ſuch things as nature wants and religion approves; who was as pure from all the motives of envy and covetouſneſs, as from thoughts of murder; who, in this freedom from worldly paſſions, had a ſoul full of divine love, wiſhing and praying that all men may have what they want of worldly things, and be partakers of eternal glory in the world to come: do but fancy a man living in this manner, and your own conſcience will immediately tell you, that he is the happieſt man in the world, and that it is not in the power of the richeſt imagination to invent any higher happineſs in the preſent ſtate of life. So true it is, that the more we live by rules of religion, the more peaceable and happy do we render our lives.

How different is the condition of a certain lady, who is always telling you how provoked ſhe is, what intolerable ſhocking things happen to her, what monſtrous uſage ſhe ſuffers, and what vexations ſhe meets with every where! ſhe tells you that her patience is quite worn out, and there is no bearing the behaviour of people. Every aſſembly that ſhe is at ſends her home provoked; ſomething or other has been ſaid or done, that no reaſonable well bred perſon ought to bear. Such is the diſquiet life of one who has nothing to torment her but her own ſpirit. If you could inſpire her with a Chriſtian humility, you need do no more to make her as happy as any perſon in the world. This virtue would make her thankful for half ſo much health as ſhe has had, and help her to enjoy more for the time to come.

I HAVE juſt touched upon theſe characters to demonſtrate to you in the plaineſt manner, that the ſtricteſt

rules of religion are ſo far from rendering a life dull, anxious, and uncomfortable, as is above objected, that on the contrary all the miſeries, vexations and complaints that are in the world, are owing to the want of religion, being entirely cauſed by thoſe abſurd paſſions which religion teaches us to ſubdue. For all the wants which diſturb human life, which make us uneaſy to ourſelves, quarrelſome with others, and unthankful to God; which weary us with vain labours, and fooliſh anxieties; which carry us from project to project, from place to place, in a poor purſuit of we know not what, are the wants which neither God, nor nature, nor reaſon hath ſubjected us to, but which are ſolely infuſed into us by pride, envy, and covetouſneſs. So far therefore as you reduce your deſires to ſuch things as nature and reaſon require; ſo far as you regulate all the motions of your heart by the ſtrict rules of religion, ſo far you remove yourſelf from that infinity of wants and vexations, which torment every heart that is left to itſelf.

MOST people indeed confeſs that religion preſerves us from a great many evils, and helps us in a great many reſpects to a more happy enjoyment of ourſelves; but then they imagine that this is only true of ſuch a moderate ſhare of religion as reſtrains us from the exceſſes of our paſſions. They maintain that the ſtrict rules of an exalted piety are ſuch contradictions to our nature, as muſt needs make our lives dull and uncomfortable. Although the weakneſs of this objection ſufficiently appears from what has been already ſaid, yet I ſhall add a few words more upon it.

THIS objection ſuppoſes that religion, moderately practiſed, adds much to the happineſs of life, but that ſuch heights of piety as the perfection of religion requires have a contrary effect. It ſuppoſes therefore, that it is deſirable to be kept from the exceſſes of envy, but not ſo to be kept from other degrees of envy; that it is deſirable to be free from a boundleſs ambition, but not ſo to be without a more moderate ſhare of ambition. It ſuppoſes

alſo that the happineſs of life conſiſts in a mixture of ambition and humility, charity and envy, heavenly affection and covetouſneſs. All which is as abſurd as to ſuppoſe that it is happy to be free from exceſſive pains, but unhappy to be without more moderate pains; or that the happineſs of life conſiſts in being partly ſick and partly well. For if humility be the peace and reſt of the ſoul, then no one has ſo much happineſs from humility as he that is the moſt humble. If exceſſive envy is a torment of the ſoul, he moſt perfectly delivers himſelf from torment, who moſt perfectly extinguiſhes every ſpark of it. If there is any peace and joy in doing any action according to the will of God, he that brings the moſt of his actions to this rule, does the moſt of all increaſe the peace and joy of his life.

For example, if religion only reſtrains the exceſſes of revenge, but lets the ſpirit ſtill live within you in leſſer inſtances, your religion may make your life a little more outwardly decent, but cannot make you at all happier or eaſier in yourſelf. But if you have once ſacrificed all thoughts of revenge in obedience to God, and are reſolved to return good for evil at all times, that you may render yourſelf more like unto God, and be fitter for his mercy in the kingdom of love and glory; this is a height of virtue that will make you feel its happineſs.

Moreover piety requires us to renounce no ways of life where we can act *reaſonably*, and offer what we do to the glory of God. All ways of life, all ſatisfactions and enjoyments, that are within theſe bounds, are fully permitted by the ſtricteſt piety. Whatever you can do and enjoy as in the preſence of God, as his ſervants and rational creatures that have received reaſon and knowledge from him, is allowed by the law of piety; and do you think your life uncomfortable unleſs you may diſpleaſe God, and act contrary to that reaſon and wiſdom which he has implanted in you? As for theſe ſatisfactions which are only invented by the folly and corruption of the world, which inflame our paſſions, and ſink our ſouls

into groſſneſs and ſenſuality, and render us incapable of the divine favour either here or hereafter, ſurely it can be no uncomfortable ſtate of life to be reſcued by religion from *ſuch* ſelf murder, and to be rendered capable of eternal happineſs.

MAN is placed in a world full of a variety of things, and his ignorance makes him uſe them in a way equally abſurd and injurious to himſelf; then religion comes in to his relief, and gives him ſtrict rules of uſing every thing that is about him, that by ſo uſing them ſuitably to his own nature, and the nature of the things, he may always have the pleaſure of receiving a right benefit from them. It tells him that this world is incapable of giving any other happineſs, and that all endeavours to be happy in wealth, in fine cloaths, rich furniture, ſtately equipage, ſhew and ſplendor, are only vain endeavours, ignorant attempts after impoſſibilities, and will only ſerve to render him more unhappy in ſuch a miſuſe of them. It tells him that although this world can do no more for him, than ſatisfy the wants of the body, yet there is a much greater good prepared for man than eating, drinking, and dreſſing; that it is yet inviſible to his eyes, being too glorious for the apprehenſions of fleſh and blood; but reſerved for him to enter upon, as ſoon as this ſhort life is over; where in a new body formed to an angelic likeneſs, he ſhall dwell in the light and glory of God to all eternity.

WOULD you ſee a ſhort deſcription of the happineſs of a life rightly employed and wholly devoted to God, you muſt look at the man in the parable, to whom his Lord had given five talents, and who had gained beſides them five talents more. "His Lord ſaid unto him, well done, good and faithful ſervant, thou haſt been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

HERE you ſee a life wholly intent upon the improvement of the talents, that is devoted wholly unto God, is

a ſtate of contentment, of proſperous labour, and glorious ſucceſs. This man ſecurely truſted in his Lord: he was tormented with no uneaſy paſſions, no vain doubts, or groundleſs fears. His pious works are made to proſper in his hands; the bleſſing of five becomes the bleſſing of ten talents, and he is received with a "Well done, good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Now as nothing elſe was left to the choice of this man, but either to be happy in uſing his gifts to the glory of his Lord, or miſerable by uſing them according to his own humours and fancies; ſo the ſtate of Chriſtianity leaves us no other choice. All that we have, all that we are, all that we enjoy, are only ſo many talents from God: if we uſe them rightly, our five talents will become ten, and our labours will carry us into the joy of our Lord; but if we abuſe them to the gratification of our own paſſions, ſacrificing the gifts of God to our own pride and vanity, we ſhall live here in uſeleſs labours and fooliſh anxieties, ſhunning religion as a melancholy thing, accuſing our Lord as a hard maſter, and then fall into everlaſting miſery.

We may for a while amuſe ourſelves with names and ſounds, and ſhadows of happineſs; we may talk of this greatneſs or dignity; but if we deſire real happineſs, we have no way to it, but by improving our talents, by ſo holily, and piouſly uſing the faculties of men in this preſent ſtate, that we may be happy and glorious in the power and faculties of angels in the world to come.

How ignorant therefore are they of the nature of religion, of the nature of man, and the nature of God, who think a life of ſtrict piety and devotion to God, to be a dull and uncomfortable ſtate, when it is ſo plain and certain, that there is neither comfort nor joy to be found in any thing elſe.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HAPPINESS OF A LIFE WHOLLY DEVOTED TO GOD FURTHER PROVED FROM THE VANITY, THE SENSUALITY, AND THE POOR ENJOYMENTS WHICH THEY ARE FORCED TO TAKE UP WITH, WHO LIVE ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN HUMOURS AND FANCIES.

WE may ſtill perceive more of the happineſs of a life devoted unto God, if we look at the lives of thoſe who live by no rule but their own humours and fancies. If we but obſerve what it is which they call joy, and greatneſs, and happineſs; if we ſee how they rejoice and repent, change and fly from one deluſion to another; we ſhall find great reaſon to congratulate ourſelves that God has appointed a ſtraight and narrow way that leadeth unto life, and that we are not left to the folly of our own minds, or forced to take up with ſuch ſhadows of happineſs, as the weakneſs and folly of the world have invented. I ſay invented, becauſe thoſe things, which make up the joy and happineſs of this world, are mere inventions, which have no foundation in nature or reaſon, and are in no reſpect the *proper* good or happineſs of man.

As for inſtance, when a man propoſes to be happy in the ways of ambition, by raiſing himſelf to ſome imaginary heights above other people; this is truly an invention of happineſs which has no foundation in nature, but is as mere a cheat of his own making, as if he ſhould intend to make himſelf happy by climbing up a ladder.

If a woman ſeeks for happineſs from jewels and rich cloaths, or being the firſt in ſome ridiculous faſhion, in order to become the wonder and envy of all thoughtleſs and frivolous beings like herſelf; this is as much an invention of happineſs, and as contrary to nature and

reaſon, as if ſhe ſhould propoſe to make herſelf happy by painting an image, and putting the ſame finery upon it.

It is on theſe inventions of happineſs that I deſire you to caſt your eye, that you may thence learn how great a good religion is, which delivers you from ſuch a multitude of follies and vain purſuits as are the torment and vexation of minds that wander from their true happineſs in God.

Let us take for an example the conduct of a certain lady who is well known in the world; and let her trifling enjoyments teach us what deluſions they eſcape, whoſe hearts and hopes are fixed upon happineſs in God.

If you were to live with her but one half year you would ſee all the comfort ſhe is to have during her whole life: ſhe has no more to come but the poor repetition of that which would never have pleaſed once, but through a littleneſs of mind and want of thought. She is again to be dreſſed, and keep her *viſiting* day; ſhe is again to change the colour of her cloaths, and to have a new head-dreſs. She is again to ſee who acts beſt at the play-houſe, and who ſings beſt at the opera; ſhe is again to make ten calls of ceremony in one morning, and to be ten times in a day trying to talk artfully, eaſily, and politely about nothing. She is again to be delighted with ſome new faſhion; and again angry at the change of ſome old one. She is again at cards and gaming at midnight, and again in bed at noon. She is to be again delighted with hypocritical compliments, and again diſturbed with imaginary affronts. She is again to hear the cabals and intrigues of the town; again to have ſecret intelligence of private amours, and early notice of marriages, quarrels and partings.

These are all the ſubſtantial and regular parts of her happineſs, and ſhe never knew a pleaſant day in her life, but what was owing to ſome one or more of theſe things. And it is for this happineſs, that ſhe has always been

deaf to the reaſonings of religion; that her heart has been too gay and giddy to conſider what is right or wrong in regard to eternity; or to liſten to ſuch dull words, as wiſdom, piety and devotion.

But now let it be obſerved that, as poor a round of enjoyment as this appears, yet much the greater number of women who avoid the reſtraints of religion for a gay life muſt be content with very ſmall parts of it. As they have not this lady's fortune or figure in the world, ſo they muſt give away the comforts of a pious life for a very ſmall ſhare even of her happineſs. Moſt of them indeed ſpend their time and fortunes merely in imitating the pleaſures of richer people; and may be ſaid rather to look and long after, than to enjoy thoſe deluſions which are only to be purchaſed by conſiderable wealth.

Ought we not then to bleſs God for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory, when we ſee what a variety of folly they ſink into who live according to their own humours and fancies? So whether we conſider the greatneſs of religion, or the littleneſs of all other things, and the inſignificancy of all worldly enjoyments, there is nothing to be found on this ſide the grave, for a thoughtful mind to reſt upon, but the ſolid and ſubſtantial comforts of religion.

Muſt it neceſſarily be tedious and tireſome to live in the continual exerciſe of charity, devotion, and temperance; to act wiſely and virtuouſly; to do good to the utmoſt of our power; to imitate the divine perfections, and to prepare ourſelves for the enjoyments of God? Muſt it be dull and tireſome to be delivered from blindneſs and vanity; from falſe hopes and vain fears; to improve in holineſs; to feel the comforts of conſcience in all our actions; to know that God is our friend, that all muſt work for our good; that neither life nor death, neither man nor devils can do us any harm, but that all our watchings and prayers, all our ſufferings and labours of love and charity, all our mental improvements are in a

ſhort time to be rewarded with everlaſting glory in the preſence of God? Muſt ſuch a condition as this be dull and tireſome for want of ſuch happineſs as is uſually enjoyed by the gay, the faſhionable, and the vain?

Now if this cannot be ſaid, then there is no pleaſure or happineſs loſt by being ſtrictly pious, nor has the devout man any thing to envy in the other ſtate of life. For all the art and contrivance, all the wit and ingenuity in the world, without religion, cannot make more of human life, or carry its enjoyments to any greater height than is done by the perſon whoſe character we have examined.

If you were to ſee a man endeavouring all his life to ſatisfy his thirſt by holding up one and the ſame empty cup to his mouth, you would certainly deſpiſe his ignorance. But if you ſhould ſee others of brighter parts and finer underſtandings ridiculing the poor ſatisfaction afforded by one cup, and thinking to allay their own thirſt by a variety of gilt and golden cups, would you think that theſe were ever the wiſer, or happier, or better employed for their finer ſenſe?

Now this is all the difference you can ſee in this life. The dull and heavy ſoul may be content with one empty appearance of happineſs, and be trying to hold one empty cup to his mouth all his life. But then let the wit, the ſcholar, the fine gentleman, the great ſtateſman, and the man of faſhion unite their endeavours, and they can only ſhew you more and various appearances of enjoyment; give them all the world into their hands, and they can only make a greater variety of empty cups. And if all the pleaſures of this world are but empty cups, what does it ſignify which you take, or how many you have?

If you would accuſtom yourſelf to ſuch meditations as theſe; to reflect upon the vanity of all orders of life diveſted of religion; to conſider how all the ways of the

world are ſo many different ways of error, blindneſs and miſtake; you would ſoon find your heart made wiſer by it. Theſe meditations would awaken your ſoul into a zealous deſire of that ſolid happineſs which is only to be found in a conſtant recourſe to God.

EXAMPLES of great piety are not now common in the world; it may not be your happineſs to live within ſight of any, or to have your virtue ſtimulated by their light and fervour. But the miſery and folly of worldly men are what meet your eyes in every place, and you need not look far to ſee how poorly and how meanly men dream away their lives for want of religious wiſdom. And aſſuredly from contemplating in ſuch perſons the corruptions of the age, and the vanity of a worldly life, you may derive much benefit to yourſelves; you may be made wiſe, though not by the ſight of what piety is, yet by ſeeing what miſery and folly reign where piety is not.

TO meditate upon the perfections of the divine attributes; to contemplate the glories of heaven; to conſider the joys of ſaints and angels living for ever in the brightneſs and glory of the divine preſence; theſe are meditations of ſouls far advanced in piety, and not ſuited to all capacities or conditions. But to ſee and conſider the emptineſs and error of all worldly happineſs; to ſee the groſſneſs of ſenſuality, the poorneſs of pride, the ſtupidity of covetouſneſs, the vanity of dreſs, the deluſion of honour, the blindneſs of our paſſions, the uncertainty of our lives, and the ſhortneſs of all worldly projects; theſe are meditations ſuited to all capacities, and fitted to ſtrike all minds; they require no depth of thought, no ſublime ſpeculation, but are forced upon our obſervation, and taught us by almoſt every thing we ſee and hear.

THIS is that "wiſdom that crieth and putteth forth her voice in the ſtreets," that ſtandeth at our doors, that

appealeth to all our ſenſes, teaching us every where and in every thing, by births and burials, by ſickneſs and health, by life and death, by pains and poverty, by miſery and vanity, and by all the changes and chances of life, that there is nothing elſe for man to look after, no other end in nature for him to purſue, but a happineſs which is only to be found in the hopes and expectations of religion.

CHAPTER X.

CONCERNING THAT PART OF DEVOTION WHICH RELATES TO DAILY PRAYER, AND HOW TO INCREASE THE SPIRIT OF DEVOTION.

HAVING in the foregoing Chapters ſhewn the neceſſity of a devout ſpirit, or habit of mind, in every part of common life, I come now to conſider that part of devotion which relates to times and hours of prayer.

I WILL take it for granted that every real Chriſtian, who is in health, is up early in the morning; for it is much more reaſonable to ſuppoſe that a perſon would riſe early becauſe he is a Chriſtian, than becauſe he is a labourer, a ſervant, or a tradeſman, or has any buſineſs that requires his attendance. We naturally conceive ſome abhorrence of a man that is in bed when he ſhould be at his work. We cannot think any good of him who is ſuch a ſlave to drowſineſs as to neglect his worldly concerns. Let this therefore convince us, how odious we muſt appear in the ſight of heaven, if we are in bed, ſhut up in ſleep and darkneſs, when we ſhould be praiſing God. For if he is to be blamed as a ſlothful drone, that rather chuſes the lazy indulgence of ſleep, than to perform his proper ſhare of worldly buſineſs; how much is he to be reproached, who had rather lie folded up in bed, than be raiſing his heart to God in acts of praiſe and adoration?

PRAYER is the neareſt approach to God, and the higheſt enjoyment of him, that we are capable of in this life. It is the holieſt exerciſe of the ſoul, and the moſt exalted uſe of our beſt faculties. Sleep is ſuch a dull ſtupid ſtate of exiſtence, that, even amongſt mere animals, we deſpiſe them moſt which are moſt drowſy; he

therefore, who chuſes to yield himſelf up to a ſlothful and unneceſſary indulgence in ſleep, chuſes that ſtate which is a reproach to mere animals, rather than that exerciſe which is the glory of angels.

You will perhaps ſay that though you riſe late, yet you are always careful of your devotions when you are up. It may be ſo, but what then? Is it well done of you to riſe ſo late, becauſe you pray when you are up? Is it pardonable to waſte great part of the day in bed, becauſe ſome time after you ſay your prayers? It is as much your duty to riſe to pray, as it is to pray when you are riſen. And if you are late at your prayers, you offer to God the prayers of an idle ſlothful worſhipper, that riſes to prayers as idle ſervants riſe to their labour.

Some people will not ſcruple to tell you, that they indulge themſelves in ſleep becauſe they have nothing elſe to do; and that if they had either buſineſs or pleaſure to riſe for, they would not loſe ſo much of their time in ſleep. But ſuch people muſt be told that they miſtake the matter, that they have a great deal of buſineſs to do: they have a wayward heart to change; they have the whole ſpirit of religion to get. For ſurely he that thinks religion to be of leſs moment than buſineſs or pleaſure, and that he has nothing to do, becauſe nothing but his prayers demand his attention, may juſtly be ſaid to have the whole ſpirit of devotion to learn.

This is the right way of judging of the crime of waſting great part of our time in bed. You muſt not conſider the thing barely in itſelf, but what it proceeds from; what virtue it ſhews to be wanting; what vice it naturally ſtrengthens.

If our bleſſed Lord uſed to pray early before day; if he ſometimes ſpent whole nights in prayer; if the devout Anna was whole nights in the temple; and if St. Paul and Silas at midnight ſang praiſes unto God; if the pri-

mitive Chriſtians, for ſeveral hundred years, beſides their hours of prayer in the day time, met publickly in the churches at midnight to join in pſalms, is it not certain that theſe practices ſhewed the ſtate of their hearts? And if you live in ſuch a contrary extreme, waſting great part of every day in ſleep, thinking any time ſoon enough to be at prayers, is it not equally certain that this practice ſhews the ſtate of your hearts?

LOOK into the writings and lives of the firſt Chriſtians, and then ſay if we have not cauſe to ſhudder at our own degeneracy? you will ſee in the lives of theſe Chriſtians the ſame ſpirit which you ſee in the goſpel. Prayers, ſelf-denials, and mortifications were the common buſineſs of their lives; and if theſe things, and ſuch a life will be marks of glory at the day of judgment, where alas! muſt we hide our heads, that have ſlumbered away our time in ſloth, ſoftneſs and indulgence?

HERE then we muſt fix our charge againſt the practice of waſting ſo much unneceſſary time in ſleep; we muſt blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit that extends itſelf through our whole ſpirit, and ſupports a ſtate of mind that is wholly wrong. It is contrary to piety, not as accidental miſtakes in life are contrary to it, but in ſuch a manner as an ill habit is contrary to health.

IF a perſon who indulges in this habit prays only with his mouth; if his heart feels nothing of that which he ſays; if his prayers are only things of courſe; if they are a lifeleſs form of words which he only repeats becauſe they are ſoon ſaid, there is nothing to be wondered at in this: for ſuch diſpoſitions and ſuch feelings are the natural effects of ſuch a life.

HOPING that you are now ſufficiently convinced of the neceſſity of riſing early to your prayers, I ſhall proceed to lay before you a method of daily prayer.

I DO nôt take upon me to preſcribe to you the uſe of any particular forms of prayer, but only to ſhew the neceſſity of prayer at certain times and in a certain manner. For though I think a form of prayer very neceſſary and expedient for publick worſhip, yet if any one find a better way of raiſing his heart unto God in private than by prepared forms of prayer, I have nothing to object againſt it. Thus much I believe is certain, that the generality of Chriſtians ought to uſe a form of prayer; nay, it ſeems right for every perſon to begin with ſuch a form, and if he feels a diſpoſition to break forth into new and higher ſtrains, he ſhould leave it for a while, and follow thoſe fervours of heart till he again wants the aſſiſtance of his uſeful petitions.

ALL people that have ever made any reflections upon what paſſes in their own hearts, muſt know that they are very changeable in regard to devotion. Sometimes we are ſo awakened, have ſuch ſtrong apprehenſions of the divine preſence, are ſo full of deep compunction for our ſins, that we cannot confeſs them in any language but that of tears.

ON the other hand we are ſometimes ſo ſunk into our bodies, ſo dull and unaffected with that which concerns our ſouls, that our hearts are as much too low for our prayers. We cannot feel half of that in our hearts, which we have in our mouths; we thank and praiſe God with forms of words, but our hearts have little or no ſhare in them.

IT is therefore highly neceſſary to provide againſt this inconſtancy by having at hand ſuch forms of prayer as may beſt ſuit us, when our hearts are in their beſt ſtate, and alſo be moſt likely to raiſe and ſtir them up when they are ſunk into dullneſs. For as words have a power of affecting our hearts on all occaſions, and as the ſame things differently expreſſed, have various effects upon the mind, ſo it is reaſonable that we ſhould make this advantage of language, and provide ourſelves with ſuch forms

of expreſſions as are moſt ſuitable and likely to move and enliven our ſouls, and to fill them with proper ſentiments.

THE firſt thing that you are to do, when you are upon your knees, is to ſhut your eyes, and, with a ſhort ſilence, let your ſoul place itſelf as in the preſence of God; that is, you are to uſe this, or ſome better method, in order to ſeparate yourſelf from all common thoughts, and make your heart as ſenſible as you can of the divine preſence. Now if this recollection of ſpirit is neceſſary (and who can ſay it is not?) then how poorly muſt they perform their devotions who are always in a hurry; who begin them in haſte, and hardly allow themſelves time to repeat their form of words with any gravity or attention? Theirs is properly ſaying prayers inſtead of praying.

To proceed: if you were to uſe yourſelf, as far as you can, to pray always in the ſame place, and to reſerve that place for devotion, and not allow yourſelf to do any thing common in it; this would diſpoſe you to be always in the ſpirit of religion when you were there, and fill you with wiſe and holy thoughts when you were by yourſelf. You would be afraid of thinking or doing any thing that was fooliſh near that place, which was the place of prayer, and holy intercourſe with God.

WHEN you begin your petitions, uſe ſuch various expreſſions of the attributes of God, as may make you moſt ſenſible of the greatneſs and power of the divine nature. Begin then in words like theſe: "O! Being of all beings; fountain of all light and glory; gracious Father of men and angels, whoſe univerſal ſpirit is every where preſent, giving life, and light, and joy to all angels in heaven, and all creatures upon earth!" For theſe repreſentations of the divine attributes, which ſhew us in ſome degree the majeſty and greatneſs of God, are excellent means of raiſing our hearts into lively acts of worſhip and adoration.

And now if people of leiſure, whether men or women, who are often at a loſs how to ſpend their time; who are forced into poor contrivances, idle viſits, and ridiculous diverſions, merely to get rid of hours that hang heavily upon their hands; if ſuch perſons were to appoint ſome certain ſpaces of time to the ſtudy of devotion, ſearching after all means and helps to attain a devout ſpirit; if they were to collect the beſt forms of ſupplication, to uſe themſelves to tranſcribe the fineſt paſſages of ſcripture prayers; if they were to collect the devotions, confeſſions, petitions, praiſes, reſignations, and thankſgivings which are ſcattered up and down in the pſalms, and range them under proper heads, as materials for their own devotions; if their minds were often thus employed, ſometimes meditating upon them, ſometimes getting them by heart, and making them as habitual as their own thoughts, how fervently would they pray who came thus prepared for prayer! How much better would it be to make this uſe of leiſure time, how much better to employ it in this manner than in the conſtant purſuit after vain, unprofitable, and frivolous amuſements!

But though people of leiſure ſeem called more particularly to this ſtudy of devotion; yet people of much worldly buſineſs, or labour, muſt not think themſelves excuſed from this, or ſome better method of improving their devotion. Nay, the greater their buſineſs is, the more need have they to ſolicit the grace of God to ſecure them from ſinking into worldly tempers, and to preſerve a ſenſe and taſte of heavenly things in their minds.

The ſpirit of devotion indeed, we all know, is the gift of God, and not attainable by any mere power of our own, yet it is moſtly given, and never withheld from, thoſe who by a wiſe and proper means prepare themſelves for a reception of it.

And is it not then amazing to ſee how eagerly men employ their parts, their ſagacity, time, ſtudy, application, and exerciſe, how all helps are called to their aſſiſt-

ance, when any thing is intended, or desired in worldly matters, and how dull, negligent, and unimproved they are, how little they use their parts, sagacity, and abilities to raise and increase their devotion?

A BRIEF account of a person with whom I am well acquainted, will serve to illustrate this subject. He is a man considerably advanced in age, and has made a great figure in business, every branch of which has received some improvement from him: he is always contriving to carry every method of doing any thing to its greatest height. The soundness and strength of his mind, and his just way of thinking, makes him intent upon removing all imperfections. By continual exercise in these matters, by often digesting his thoughts in writing, and trying various ways of accomplishing the same object, he has rendered himself a great master of most concerns in human life.

THE only thing that has never fallen into his consideration, nor received any benefit from his judicious mind, is devotion: this is just in the same poor state as when he was six years of age; and the old man prays now, in that little form of words which his mother used to hear him repeat night and morning. If he sees a book of devotion, he passes it by as he does a spelling book, because he remembers that he learned to pray so many years ago when he learnt to spell.

NOW how poor and pitiable is the conduct of this man of sense, who has so much judgment and understanding in every thing but in that which is the whole wisdom of man! And how miserably do many people, more or less, imitate this conduct! But all this seems to be owing to a strange infatuated state of negligence, which keeps people from considering what devotion is. For if they did but once proceed so far as to reflect about it, or ask themselves any questions concerning it, they would soon see, that the spirit of devotion was like any other *faculty*, or *sense*, which is only to be improved by study, care, appli-

cation, and ſuch means and helps as are neceſſary to make a man a proficient in any art or ſcience.

THERE is another perſon whoſe hiſtory may, I think, be uſeful to us. He is a man of learning, and well verſed in all the beſt authors of antiquity; he has read them ſo much, that he has entered into their ſpirit, and can very ingeniouſly imitate the manner of many of them: all their thoughts are his thoughts, and he can expreſs himſelf in their language. He is ſo great a friend to this improvement of the mind, that if he meets with a young ſcholar, he never fails to adviſe him concerning his ſtudies. He tells the young man that he muſt not think that he has done enough when he has only learnt languages; but that he muſt be daily converſant with the beſt authors; read them again and again; catch their ſpirit by living with them, and that there is no other way of becoming like them, or of making himſelf a man of taſte and judgment.

How truly wiſe might this perſon have been, and how much good might he have done in the world, if he had but thought as juſtly of devotion as he does of learning! He never indeed ſays any thing ſhocking, or offenſive about devotion, becauſe he never thinks or talks upon the ſubject. It ſuffers nothing from him but neglect or diſregard. He imagines that he ſufficiently ſhews his reſpect for the holy ſcriptures, when he tells you that he has no other book of piety beſides them.

IT is very well, my friend, that you prefer the Bible to all other books of piety: he has no judgment who is not ſo far of your opinion. But why ſhould the Bible be alone in your ſtudy? Is not the ſpirit of the ſaints, the piety of the holy followers of Jeſus Chriſt, as good and neceſſary a means of entering into the ſpirit and taſte of the goſpel, as the reading of the ancients is of entering into the ſpirit of antiquity? If the true ſpirit of poetry is only to be got by much reading of poets and orators, is not the ſpirit of devotion to be got in the ſame way, by frequently read-

ing the holy thoughts and pious ſtrains of devout men? Do you adviſe your orator to tranſlate the beſt orations, to commit much of them to memory; to be often exerciſing his talent in this manner, that habits of thinking and ſpeaking juſtly may be formed in his mind; and is there not the ſame benefit and advantage to be made by books of devotion? Should not men uſe them in the ſame way, that habits of devotion and aſpiring after God in holy thoughts may be well formed in the ſoul?

Now the reaſon why this perſon does not think and judge more rationally of devotion is becauſe it never entered into his head to conſider devotion as a ſtate of the heart, as an improveable talent of the mind, as a temper that is to grow and increaſe like our reaſon and judgment, and to be formed in us by ſuch regular, diligent uſe of proper means as are neceſſary to form any other wiſe habits of the mind. It is for want of this conviction that he has been contented all his life with repeating a form of words, the bare letter of prayer, though eagerly bent upon entering into the ſpirit of heathen poets.

It is ſurely a lamentable thing that numbers of ſcholars are more or leſs chargeable with this exceſs of folly; ſo negligent of improving their devotion, and ſo deſirous of other poor accompliſhments, as if they thought it a nobler talent to be able to write an epigram in the turn of Martial, than to live and think, and pray to God in the ſpirit of St. Auſtin. And yet to correct this temper, and fill a man with a quite contrary ſpirit, there ſeems to be no more required than the bare belief of Chriſtianity.

If you were to aſk the two perſons whoſe characters have been delineated, whether piety is not the higheſt perfection of man, or devotion the greateſt attainment in the world, they muſt be forced to anſwer in the affirmative, or elſe give up the truths of the goſpel. To compare indeed any accompliſhment with devotion, or to think that any thing, or all the things in the world can bear any proportion to its excellency, is the ſame abſurdity in

a Chriſtian, as it would be in a philoſopher to prefer a ſcanty meal to the greateſt improvement in knowledge.

As philoſophy profeſſes merely the ſearch and inquiry after knowledge, ſo Chriſtianity ſuppoſes, intends, deſires and aims at nothing elſe but the raiſing fallen man to a divine life, to ſuch habits of holineſs, ſuch degrees of devotion, as may fit him to enter amongſt the holy inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven. He that does not believes this of Chriſtianity may be reckoned an infidel; and he that believes thus much has faith enough to give him a right judgment of the value of things, and enable him to conquer all the temptations the world can lay in his way.

To conclude this chapter: devotion is nothing elſe but right apprehenſions and right affections towards God, and as prayer is the proper means of ſtrengthening and improving them, ſo we muſt uſe all our care and contrivance to give it it's full power. For this purpoſe we muſt have recourſe to alms, ſelf denial, frequent retirements, and holy reading; we muſt obſerve regular hours of prayer; we muſt always employ the beſt forms we can procure; and we muſt continually adapt our devotions to the condition of our lives and the ſtate of our hearts. They who have moſt leiſure are more eſpecially and more ſeriouſly called to an eminent obſervance of theſe holy rules of a devout life; and they, who through the neceſſity of their ſituation, and not through their own choice, have but little time to employ thus, muſt make the beſt uſe of that little.

Such are the infallible methods of making devotion produce a devout life, and ſuch are the methods that, with the bleſſing of God, will ſecure to us a happy eternity.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE SUBJECTS MOST PROPER FOR OUR MORNING'S DEVOTION.

YOU have ſeen in the foregoing chapter what means you are to uſe to improve and raiſe your devotion, and how early you ought to begin your prayers. I ſhall now take the liberty of ſuggeſting a few additional hints, which I hope will be found uſeful in the diſcharge of ſo important a duty.

I WOULD recommend praiſe and thankſgiving as particularly proper for our morning's devotions, not only becauſe it is our bounden duty to return thanks for our reſt and protection from all evil during the night, but becauſe no ſtate of mind is ſo holy, ſo excellent and ſo truly perfect as that of gratitude to God, and conſequently nothing is of more importance in religion than what exerciſes this habit of mind. A dull uneaſy complaining ſpirit, which is unfortunately ſometimes the ſpirit of thoſe who ſeem careful of religion, is of all tempers the moſt contrary to it; for it diſowns that God, whom it pretends to adore.

IF a man does not believe that all the world is as God's family, where nothing happens by chance, but all is guided and directed by the care and providence of a Being, who is all love and goodneſs to all his creatures, he cannot be ſaid truly to believe in God. But he, who believes that every thing happens to him for the beſt, cannot poſſibly complain for want of ſomething that is better. If therefore you live in murmuring and diſcontent, accuſing all the accidents of life, it is not becauſe you are a weak and infirm creature, but it is becauſe you want the firſt principle of religion, a right belief in God.

For as thankfulneſs is an expreſs acknowledgment of the goodneſs of God towards you, ſo repining and complaints are a plain accuſation of God's want of goodneſs towards you.

As praiſe and thankſgiving were the firſt devout offerings made to God by the primitive Chriſtians in the morning, ſo humility was conſidered as a diſpoſition more eſpecially to be deſired and moſt earneſtly to be prayed for at that ſeaſon. It is a virtue indeed ſo truly neceſſary to the attainment of a pious life, that I ſhould by all means adviſe petitions for the acquirement of it to be ſubjoined to the foregoing ſubjects of praiſe and thankſgiving. An humble ſtate of mind is the very ſtate of religion, the life and ſoul of piety, the foundation and ſupport of every virtue, the beſt guard and ſecurity of all holy affections. Without humility there is no pretending to a reaſonable pious life, and yet, generally ſpeaking, it is of all virtues the leaſt underſtood, the leaſt regarded, the leaſt intended, the leaſt deſired, and the leaſt ſought after.

No people have more occaſion to be afraid of the approaches of pride, than thoſe who have made ſome advances in a pious life; for pride can grow as well upon our good qualities as upon our vices, and ſteals upon us on all occaſions. It is for this reaſon that I ſo earneſtly adviſe every devout perſon to begin every day in the pious exerciſe of humility, that he may go on in ſafety under it's protection, and not fall a ſacrifice to his own progreſs in thoſe virtues, which are to ſave mankind from deſtruction.

Humility does not conſiſt in having a worſe opinion of ourſelves than we deſerve, or in abaſing ourſelves lower than we really are. But as all virtue is founded in truth, ſo humility is founded in a true and juſt ſenſe of our weakneſs, miſery, and ſin. He who rightly feels and lives in this ſenſe of his condition lives in humility.

THE weakneſs of our ſtate appears from our inability to do any thing as of ourſelves. We are indeed active beings, but can only act by a power, that is every moment lent us from God. We have no power of our own to move a leg or ſtir a foot, any more than we have to move the ſun, or ſtop the clouds. When we ſpeak a word or make a ſound, we act no more by our own power or ſtrength, than the apoſtles acted by their own power or ſtrength when a word from their mouths caſt out devils, or cured diſeaſes. As it was ſolely the power of God that enabled them to ſpeak to ſuch purpoſes, ſo it is ſolely the power of God which enables us to ſpeak at all. This is the dependent helpleſs poverty of our ſtate, and is aſſuredly a great reaſon for humility.

ANOTHER argument for humility is founded on the miſery of our condition, which appears in this, that we uſe the borrowed powers of our natures to the torment and vexation of ourſelves and our fellow creatures. God Almighty has entruſted us with the uſe of reaſon, and we uſe it to the diſorder and corruption of our nature. We reaſon ourſelves into all kinds of folly and miſery, and make our lives the ſport of fooliſh and extravagant paſſions, ſeeking after imaginary happineſs of all ſorts and ſhapes, creating to ourſelves a thouſand wants, amuſing our hearts with falſe hopes, and fears, uſing the world worſe than irrational animals, envying, vexing, and tormenting one another, with reſtleſs paſſions and unreaſonable contentions.

LET any one man look back upon his own life, and ſee what uſe he has made of his reaſon, how little he has conſulted it, and ſtill how much leſs he has followed it; what fooliſh paſſions, what vain thoughts, what needleſs labours, what extravagant projects have taken up the greateſt part of his time; how abſurd he has been in his words and converſations; how ſeldom he has done well with judgment, and how often he has been kept from doing ill by accident; how ſeldom he has been able to pleaſe himſelf, and how often he has been diſpleaſed with

others; how often he has changed his counſels, hated what he loved, and loved what he hated; let any one but take this view of his own life, and he will ſee reaſon enough to confeſs that pride was not made for man. Let him conſider that if the world knew as much of him as he knows of himſelf, if they ſaw what vanity and paſſions govern his heart, and ſully and corrupt his beſt actions, he would have no more pretence to be honoured for his goodneſs and wiſdom, than a rotten diſtempered body has to be loved and admired for its beauty and comelineſs.

THIS indeed is ſo true, and ſo well known to almoſt all people, that nothing would appear more dreadful to them, than to have their hearts fully diſcovered to the eyes of all beholders. And ſhall pride be entertained in a heart thus conſcious of its own miſerable behaviour? Shall a creature in ſuch a condition, that he could not ſupport himſelf under the ſhame of being known to the world in his real ſtate; ſhall ſuch a creature, becauſe his ſhame is only known to God and his own conſcience, dare, in the ſight of the Almighty, to be vain and proud of himſelf?

BUT if we conſider the ſhame and guilt of ſin, we ſhall find a ſtill greater reaſon for humility. No creature that lived in innocence would have thereby any pretence for ſelf-honour and eſteem; becauſe as a creature, all that it is, or has or does, is from God, and therefore all the honour that belongs to it, is only due to God. But if a creature that is a ſinner and deſerves nothing from God but pains and puniſhments for the ſhameful abuſe of its powers; if ſuch a creature pretends to ſelf glory for any thing that it does, it can only be ſaid to glory in it's ſhame.

NOW how monſtrous and odious the nature of ſin is, ſufficiently appears from that great atonement which is neceſſary to cleanſe us from the guilt of it. Nothing leſs has been required than the ſufferings and death of the

Son of God. Had he not taken our nature upon him, we ſhould have been for ever ſeparated from God, and incapable of ever appearing before him; and is there then any room for pride and ſelf glory whilſt we are partakers of ſuch a nature as this?

TURN your eyes towards heaven, and fancy that you ſee what is doing there; that you ſee cherubims and ſeraphims, and all the glorious inhabitants of that place, all united in one work; not ſeeking glory from one another; not contemplating their own perfections, nor valuing themſelves and deſpiſing others, but all happy in one and the ſame joy; "caſting their crowns before the throne of God, giving glory, and honour and power to him alone." When you have done this reflect upon yourſelves, and conſider how hateful it muſt be to God to ſee ſuch poor worms, ſuch miſerable ſinners taking delight in their own fancied glories, or daring to diſpute his laws and poſitive commands, daring to live after their own whims and fancies, without ever thinking it neceſſary ſtrictly to attend to the divine precepts of the goſpel, though it is expreſsly declared that no other way will ſecure you from the wrath to come.

THESE are the things you are often to meditate upon: you muſt often recollect that you have not only the virtue of humility to learn, but that you muſt be content to proceed as a learner, endeavouring after greater degrees of it, practiſing every day acts of humility as you every day practiſe acts of devotion. You would not imagine yourſelf to be devout, becauſe in your judgment you approved of prayers, and often declared your mind in favour of devotion: yet how many people imagine themſelves humble enough for no other reaſon but becauſe they often commend humility, and make vehement declarations againſt pride?

I AM acquainted with a perſon whoſe character may furniſh us with a uſeful leſſon upon this ſubject. He is rich, of good birth and very fine parts, but is immode-

rately fond of dreſs, and curious in the ſmalleſt matters that can add any ornament to his perſon. He is haughty and imperious to all his inferiors; is very full of every thing that he himſelf ſays or does; and never ſuppoſes it poſſible for ſuch a judgment as his to be miſtaken. He can bear no contradiction, and diſcovers the weakneſs of your underſtanding as ſoon as you oppoſe him.

NOTHING however is ſo odious to him as a conceited proud man; and the misfortune is that in this he is ſo very quick ſighted, that he diſcovers in almoſt every body ſome ſtrokes of vanity. On the other hand he is exceedingly fond of humble modeſt people, "Humility, ſays he, is ſo amiable a quality, that it commands our reſpect wherever we meet with it. There is no poſſibility of deſpiſing the meaneſt perſon that has it, or eſteeming the greateſt man that wants it."

IT is very true, my friend, that you ſpeak ſincerely when you ſay that you love humility and hate pride; but take this along with you, that you never once in your life thought of any other humility, or any other pride, than that which you have ſeen in other people. Your caſe is a common one. The fuller of pride any one is himſelf, the more offended will he be at the ſmalleſt inſtance of it in other people. But the loving of humility is of no benefit or advantage to you, unleſs you love to ſee your own thoughts, words, and actions governed by it; and the hating of pride does you no good, unleſs you hate to harbour any degree of it in your own heart.

NOW in order to begin and ſet out well in the practice of humility, you muſt take it for granted that you are proud, and that you have been more or leſs all your life infected with this unreaſonable temper. There is indeed no vice that is more deeply rooted in our nature, or that receives ſuch conſtant nouriſhment from almoſt every thing we think or do; and if you find it diſagreeable to your mind to entertain this opinion of yourſelf, and think you are not amongſt thoſe who want to be cured of pride,

you may be as ſure, as if an angel from heaven had told you, that you have not only much of it, but that all your humility is ſtill to ſeek. For you can exhibit no greater ſign of a confirmed pride, than when you think you are humble enough.

He who thinks he loves God enough, ſhews himſelf to be an entire ſtranger to that holy paſſion; ſo he that thinks he has humility enough ſhews that he is not ſo much as a beginner in the practice of humility.

CHAPTER XII.

SHEWING HOW DIFFICULT THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY IS MADE BY THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD.

EVERY perſon when he firſt applies himſelf to the exerciſe of the virtue of humility, muſt, as I ſaid before, conſider himſelf as a learner. He has not only as much to do as he who has ſome new art or ſcience to learn, but has alſo a great deal to unlearn. He muſt forget and depart from an abundance of paſſions and opinions, which the faſhion and ſpirit of the world have made natural to him; and this is one reaſon why Chriſtianity is ſo often repreſented as a new birth, and a new ſpirit.

ACCORDING to the ſpirit and faſhion of this world, whoſe corrupt air we have all breathed, there are many things that paſs for great and honourable, which are notwithing ſo far from being ſo, that the true greatneſs and honour of our nature conſiſts in the not deſiring them. To abound in wealth, to have fine houſes, and rich clothes, to be attended with ſplendour and equipage, to be beautiful in our perſons, to have titles of dignity, to be above our fellow creatures, to command the bows and obeiſance of the multitude, to overcome our enemies with power, to ſubdue all that oppoſe us, to eat and drink, and delight ourſelves in the moſt coſtly manner: theſe are the great, the honourable, and deſirable things, to which the ſpirit of the world turns the eyes of all people.

Now the ſpirit of the goſpel is chiefly the hiſtory of Chriſt's conqueſts over this ſpirit of the world, and the number of true Chriſtians is only the number of thoſe who, following the doctrines of Chriſt, have lived con-

trary to this worldly ſpirit. "If any man hath not the ſpirit of Chriſt he is none of his." Again, "whoſoever is born of God overcometh the world." "Set your affections on things above, and not on things on earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Chriſt in God." This is the language of the New Teſtament, this is the mark of Chriſtianity.

But notwithſtanding the clearneſs and plainneſs of theſe doctrines, which thus renounce the indulgences of the world, the greater part of Chriſtians live and die ſlaves to it's faſhions and follies. Would a man drudge on to the end of his days in buſineſs, but that he knows the world moſt of all admires riches and ſhow? How fearful are many people of having their houſes poorly furniſhed, and themſelves not ſufficiently dreſſed, for this only reaſon, leſt the world ſhould make no account of them, and place them amongſt low and mean people!

Many a one would drop a reſentment, and forgive an affront, but that he dreads the character of that poor ſpirited creature which the world generally eſteems a man for ſuch behaviour. How many would practiſe Chriſtian temperance and ſobriety in their utmoſt perfection, were it not for the cenſure which the world paſſes upon ſuch a life! Others have frequent intentions of living up to the rules of Chriſtianity, but are deterred by conſidering what the world would ſay of them. Few there are who have reſolution enough to diſregard the world, and dare to be eminent in the ſight of God.

From this quarter ariſes the great difficulty of humility, becauſe it cannot ſubſiſt in any mind, that is not dead to the world, and has not parted with all deſire of gaining greatneſs and honours. So that in order to be truly humble, you muſt unlearn all thoſe notions which you have been all your life learning from this corrupt ſpirit of the world.

You will perhaps ſay that the world is now become

Chriſtian, at leaſt that part of it where we live, and therefore it is not to be conſidered as in the ſtate of oppoſition to the goſpel, in which it is acknowledged to have been when it was heathen. I can readily admit that the world now profeſſeth Chriſtianity; but will any one ſay that this Chriſtian world is of the ſpirit of Chriſt? Are the paſſions of ſenſuality, ſelf-love, pride, covetouſneſs, ambition and vain glory, leſs contrary to the ſpirit of the goſpel amongſt Chriſtians than they were amongſt heathens? Or can you ſay that the paſſions and propenſities of the heathen world are extinguiſhed?

It is but too true that the world by profeſſing Chriſtianity is ſo far from being leſs dangerous than it was before, that it has by its favours deſtroyed more Chriſtians than ever it did by its perſecutions. It is a more dangerous enemy by having loſt it's appearance of enmity. It's outward profeſſion of Chriſtianity makes it no longer conſidered as an enemy, and therefore the generality of people are eaſily perſuaded to be directed and governed by it.

How many conſciences are kept quiet upon no other foundation than that they do as others do, and ſin under the authority of the Chriſtian world. How many of the directions of the goſpel lie unregarded, and how unconcernedly do people read them, for no other reaſon, than becauſe they are diſregarded by the Chriſtian world! How many compliances do people make to the Chriſtian world without any heſitation or remorſe, which, if they had been required by the heathens, would have been refuſed as contrary to the holineſs of Chriſtianity! Who could be content to ſee how oppoſite his life is to the goſpel, but becauſe he ſees that he lives as the Chriſtian world doth!

Blind error! fatal deluſion! Who that reads the goſpel attentively would want to be perſuaded of the neceſſity of ſelf-denial, humility and poverty of ſpirit, but that the authority of the world has baniſhed the doctrines of the croſs.

THERE is nothing therefore that a good Chriſtian ſhould be more ſuſpicious of, or more conſtantly guard againſt, than the authority of the Chriſtian world; certainly the change which the world hath undergone, has only altered it's methods, but not leſſened it's power, of deſtroying religion. Chriſtians had nothing to fear from the heathen world but the loſs of their lives; but the world, become a friend, makes it difficult for them to ſave their religion. For only aſk yourſelf: is the piety, humility and ſobriety of the Chriſtian world, the piety, humility and ſobriety of the Chriſtian ſpirit? Need a man do more to make his ſoul unfit for the mercies of God than become greedy and ambitious of honour and diſtinction? Yet how can a man renounce this temper, without renouncing the ſpirit and temper of the world in which he lives?

How can a man be made more incapable of the ſpirit of Chriſt, than by a wrong value of money; and yet how can he be more wrong in his value of it, than by following the example of the Chriſtian world? Nay, in every order and ſtation of life, whether of learning or buſineſs, whether in church or ſtate, you cannot act up to the ſpirit of religion without renouncing the moſt general temper and behaviour of the Chriſtian world, and though ſhort ſighted human prudence ſeems to talk wiſely about the neceſſity of avoiding particularities, yet he who dares not be ſo *weak* as to be in ſome degree particular, will be often obliged to avoid the moſt ſubſtantial duties of Chriſtian piety.

THESE reflections will, I hope, with the bleſſing of God, help you to break through thoſe difficulties, and reſiſt thoſe temptations, which the authority and faſhion of the world have raiſed againſt the practice of true Chriſtianity.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHEWING HOW THE EDUCATION THAT MEN RECEIVE IN THEIR YOUTH MAKES THE DOCTRINES OF HUMILITY DIFFICULT TO BE PRACTISED.

A GREAT difficulty in the practice of humility ariſes from our education. We are in general corruptly educated, and then ſent out to take our courſe in a corrupt world. Great part of the world are undone by being born and bred in families that have no religion; where they are made vicious and irregular by being like thoſe with whom they firſt lived. But this is not the thing I now particularly mean: the education to which I here allude is ſuch as children generally receive from virtuous and ſober parents, learned tutors, and governors.

HAD we continued perfect as God created the firſt man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a ſufficient ſelf-inſtruction for every one; but as ſickneſs and diſeaſes have created the neceſſity of medicines and phyſicians, ſo the changes and diſorders of our rational nature have introduced the neceſſity of education and tutors.

Now as the inſtruction of every art or ſcience is founded upon the diſcoveries, the wiſdom, and maxims of the ſeveral great men who have laboured in it; ſo that human wiſdom, or right uſe of our reaſon, which young people ſhould be called to by education, is nothing elſe but the beſt experience, and fineſt reaſonings of men who have devoted themſelves to the ſtudy of wiſdom and the improvement of human nature. All therefore that great ſaints and dying men, when the fulleſt of light and conviction, and after the higheſt improvement of their reaſon, have ſaid of the neceſſity of piety, of the excellence of

virtue, of their duty to God, of the emptineſs of riches, of the vanity of the world; all the judgments, reaſonings, and maxims of the wiſeſt philoſophers, ſhould conſtitute the common leſſons of inſtruction for youthful minds.

THIS is the only way to make the young and ignorant part of the world the better for the wiſdom and knowledge of the wiſe and ancient. An education that is not wholly intent upon this, is as much beſide the point, as an art of phyſic that had little or no regard to the reſtoration of health.

THE youths that attended upon Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Epictetus, were thus educated; their daily leſſons were ſo many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end, and the right uſe of his faculties; upon the immortality of the ſoul, its relation to God, the beauty of virtue, and its agreeableneſs to the divine nature; upon the dignity of reaſon, and the neceſſity of temperance, fortitude, and generoſity; and the ſhame and folly of indulging our paſſions. Now as Chriſtianity has, as it were, new created the moral and religious world, and ſet every thing that is reaſonable, wiſe, holy and deſirable in its true point of view, ſo one might expect that the education of youth would be as much amended by Chriſtianity as the faith and doctrines of religion are amended by it. As it has introduced ſuch a new ſtate of things, and ſo fully informed us of the nature of man, the ends of his creation, the ſtate of his condition; as it has fixed all our good and evil, taught us the means of purifying our ſouls, pleaſing God, and becoming eternally happy: one might naturally ſuppoſe that every Chriſtian country would abound with ſchools for the teaching, not only a few queſtions and anſwers of a catechiſm, but for the forming, training and practiſing youths in ſuch an outward courſe of life, as the higheſt precepts, the ſtricteſt rules, and the ſublimeſt doctrines of Chriſtianity require.

BUT when we conſider our modern education, do we find this to be the caſe? Alas! inſtead of the pure genuine

principles of Chriſtianity being made the firſt object, and, as it were, the very foundation of every other improvement, how very ſlightly and very indifferently is the one thing needful attended to! Are not the moſt improper books put into the hands of mere children, and their tender minds corrupted, and inflamed by the luſcious and and obſcene repreſentations of the moſt filthy, indecent, and immoral poets? And can we then wonder to ſee young men, and too often old ones, ſo looſe, and ſo reprehenſible in their principles, and, of courſe, in their conduct?

But there is another paſſion which our preſent mode of education ſtrongly tends to implant in the minds of children. I mean pride, a paſſion not leſs dangerous or deteſtable than that of luſt. We ſtir them up with vain thoughts of themſelves, and do every thing we can to puff up their minds with a ſenſe of their own abilities. Whatever way of life we intend them for, we apply to their natural vanity, and exhort them to every thing from corrupt motives. We ſtimulate them to action from principles of ſtrife and ambition, from glory, envy, and a deſire of diſtinction, that they may excel others, and ſhine in the eyes of the world. We repeat and inculcate theſe motives upon them, till they think it a part of their duty to be proud, envious, and vain glorious of their accompliſhments; and when we have taught them to ſcorn to be outdone by any, to bear no rival, to thirſt after applauſe, to be content with nothing but the higheſt diſtinctions, we then begin to take comfort in them, and promiſe ourſelves and the world ſome mighty things from youths of ſuch a glorious ſpirit.

If children are deſigned for holy orders, we ſet before them ſome eminent orator, whoſe fine preaching has made him the admiration of the age, and carried him through all the dignities and preferments of the church. We encourage them to have all theſe honours in their view, and to expect the reward of their ſtudies from them.

If the youth is intended for trade, we bid him look at all the rich men of the ſame buſineſs, and to conſider how many are carried about in their ſtately coaches, who began in the ſame low ſituation in which he is now placed. We awaken his ambition, and endeavour to give his mind a right turn by telling him how very rich ſuch and ſuch a tradeſman died.

If he is to be a lawyer, then we ſet the moſt celebrated counſellors and diſtinguiſhed judges before his eyes. We tell him what great fees, and great applauſe attend fine pleading. We exhort him to take fire at theſe things, to raiſe a ſpirit of emulation in himſelf, and to be content with nothing leſs than the higheſt honours of the long robe.

That this is the nature of what is called our beſt education is too plain to need any proof; and I believe there are few parents who would not be glad to ſee theſe inſtructions daily given to their children. And yet after all this we complain of the effects of pride; we wonder to ſee grown men governed by ambition, envy, ſcorn, and a thirſt after glory; not conſidering that all the time of their youth they were directed by the ſame principles. You teach a child to ſcorn to be outdone; to pant after diſtinction and applauſe; and is it any wonder that he continues to act all his life long in the ſame manner?

But if a youth is ever to be ſo far a Chriſtian as to govern his heart by the doctrines of humility, I would fain know at what time he is to begin to do ſo? Or if ever he is to begin at all, why we train him up in principles of ſo different a tendency? How dry and poor muſt the doctrines of humility ſound to a youth who has been ſpurred on to all his induſtry, by ambition, envy, emulation, and a deſire of glory and diſtinction.

Envy is acknowledged by all people to be the moſt ungenerous, baſe, and wicked paſſion that can enter into the heart of man, and is held in ſuch deteſtation, that

even thoſe who moſt poſſeſs it, outwardly declare againſt it. And is this a temper to be inſtilled, nouriſhed, and eſtabliſhed in the minds of young people?

I KNOW it is ſaid that it is not envy, but emulation, that is intended to be awakened in the minds of young men. But this is vainly ſaid; for when children are taught to bear no rival, and to ſcorn to be outdone by any of their age, they are plainly and directly taught to be envious; becauſe it is impoſſible for any one to have this ſcorn to be outdone, and this contention with rivals, without burning with envy againſt all thoſe who ſeem to excel him, or get any diſtinction from him.

NAY, emulation, when underſtood in its proper ſenſe, is nothing but a refinement upon envy, or rather the moſt plauſible part of that black and venomous paſſion: for envy is not an original temper, but the natural, neceſſary and unavoidable effect of emulation, or a deſire of glory. He then who eſtabliſhes the one in the minds of young people, neceſſarily fixes the other there.

I KNOW it is urged by many people in defence of this method of education, that ambition and a deſire of glory are neceſſary to excite young perſons to induſtry; and that if we were to preſs upon them the doctrines of humility, we ſhould deject their minds, and ſink them into dullneſs and idleneſs. But can theſe people really think that children would be ſpoiled if they were not thus educated? Can they think that if any children had been educated by our bleſſed Lord or his apoſtles, that their minds would have been ſunk into dullneſs and idleneſs? Or can they think that ſuch children would not have been trained up in the ſtrict principles of a true humility? Can they ſay that our Lord, who was the meekeſt and humbleſt man that ever was upon earth, was hindered by his humility from being the greateſt example of worthy and glorious actions that ever were done by man? Can they ſay that his apoſtles, who lived in the humble ſpirit of their maſter, did therefore ceaſe to be laborious

and active inſtruments of doing good to all the world? A few ſuch reflections as theſe are ſufficient to expoſe all the poor pretences for an education in pride and ambition.

A GENTLEMAN, who lived about two hundred years ago, had but one ſon, whom he educated himſelf in his own houſe. He had not only bred him up in the ſtricteſt piety, but had likewiſe inſtructed him in the learned languages, and inſpired him with a taſte for ſeveral of the arts and ſciences, which he imagined would expand his mind, and give him more exalted and enlarged ideas of the greatneſs and perfection of the Creator.

ONE day as they were ſitting together in the garden, when the child was ten or twelve years old, his father thus began to him. "The little time that you have been in the world, my child, you have ſpent wholly with me, and my love and tenderneſs for you have made you look upon me as your only friend and benefactor, and the cauſe of all the pleaſure and comfort you enjoy. Your heart, I know, would be ready to break with grief, if you thought this was the laſt day I was to live with you.

BUT, my child, although you think yourſelf very happy, becauſe you have hold of my hand, you are now in the hands, and are under the care, of a much better Father and Friend than I am; whoſe love to you is much greater than mine; and from whom you receive ſuch bleſſings as no mortal can give. That God whom you have ſeen me daily worſhip, and whom I daily call upon to bleſs both you and me, and all mankind; whoſe wondrous acts are recorded in thoſe ſcriptures which you conſtantly read; who has created ſo many millions of men that lived and died before you were born, and whom the ſpirits of good men and angels now worſhip; this great God is your loving Father and Friend, from whom, and not from me, you received your being.

YOU ſee, my ſon, this large and wide firmament over our heads, where the ſun and moon and all the ſtars ap-

pear in their turns. If you were to be carried up to any of theſe bodies at this vaſt diſtance from us, you would ſtill diſcover others as much above them, as the ſtars you ſee are above the earth. Were you to go up or down, eaſt or weſt, north or ſouth, you would find the ſame height, without any top, and the ſame depth, without any bottom. And yet, my child, ſo great is God, that all theſe bodies, added together, are but as grains of ſand in his ſight. But you are as much the care of this great God and Father of all worlds, and all ſpirits, as if he had no ſon but you, or there were no creature for him to love and protect but you alone.

How trifling my power is, and how little I am able to do for you, you have often ſeen; and particularly in your late ſickneſs. I could bring you food and medicines, but had no power to turn them into your relief and nouriſhment. It was God alone who could do that for you.

This God then, my child, you ought to fear, to love, and to worſhip. Take him for your Lord and Father, and look unto him as the fountain and cauſe of all the good that you have received through my hands, and reverence me only as the bearer and miniſter of God's good things unto you; and he that bleſſed my father before I was born, will bleſs you when I am dead.

Your youth and little mind is only yet acquainted with my family, and therefore you think there is no happineſs out of it. But, my child, you belong to a much greater family than mine; you are a younger member of the family of this Almighty Father of all nations, who has created infinite orders of angels, and numberleſs generations of men to be fellow members of one and the ſame ſociety in heaven.

You do well to reverence and obey my authority, becauſe God has given me power over you, to bring you up in his fear, and to do for you as the holy fathers re-

corded in ſcripture did for their children, who are now in reſt and peace with God. I ſhall in a ſhort time die, and leave you to God and yourſelf; and if God forgiveth my ſins, I ſhall go to his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, and live amongſt patriarchs, prophets, ſaints, and martyrs, where I ſhall pray for you, and hope for your ſafe arrival at the ſame place.

MEDITATE therefore, my child, on theſe important things, and your ſoul will ſoon grow great and noble by ſo meditating upon them. Let your thoughts often leave theſe gardens, theſe fields, and farms to contemplate God and heaven, to think of angels, and the ſpirits of good men living in light and glory.

As you have been uſed to look to me in all your actions, and have been afraid to do any thing, unleſs you firſt knew my will; ſo now let it be a rule of your life to look up to God in all your actions, to do every thing in his fear, and to abſtain from doing every thing that is not according to his will. Bear him always in your mind; teach your thoughts to reverence him in every place, for there is no place in which he is not.

GOD keepeth a book of life, wherein all the actions of all men are written. Your name is there, my child, and when you die this book will be laid open before men and angels, and according as your actions are there found, you will either be received to the happineſs of thoſe holy men who have died before you, or be turned away amongſt wicked ſpirits, that are never to ſee God any more. Never forget this book, my ſon, for it is written, and it muſt be opened; you muſt ſee it, and you muſt be tried by it. Strive therefore to fill it with your good deeds, that the hand-writing of God may not appear againſt you.

GOD, my child, is all love, wiſdom and goodneſs; and every thing that he hath made, and every action that he does, is the effect of them all. Therefore you cannot

pleaſe God, but ſo far as you ſtrive to walk in love, wiſdom and goodneſs. No other life can lead to him. When you love that which God loves, you act with him; you join yourſelf to him: and when you love that which he diſlikes, then you oppoſe him, and ſeparate yourſelf from him.

FIRST of all, my child, worſhip and adore God, think of him magnificently; ſpeak of him reverently; magnify his providence; adore his power; frequent his ſervice, pray unto him conſtantly. Next to this love your neighbour, that is every man, with ſuch tenderneſs and affection as you love yourſelf. God would have all men happy; therefore do you wiſh and deſire the ſame.

BUT above all, my ſon, mark this. Never do any thing through ſtrife or envy, or emulation, or vain glory. Never do any thing to excel other people, but in order to pleaſe God, and becauſe it is his will that you ſhould do every thing in the beſt manner you can. For if it is once a pleaſure to you to excel other people, it will by degrees be a pleaſure to you to ſee other people not ſo good as yourſelf.

BANISH therefore every thought of *ſelf-pride* and *ſelf-diſtinction*, and accuſtom yourſelf to rejoice in all the excellencies and perfections of your fellow creatures, and be as glad to ſee any of their good deeds as your own. Let this be your only ſpur and motive to perform every good and laudable action, and to do every thing in as perfect a manner as you can, viz. that it is pleaſing to God, who deſires your perfection, and writes all your actions in a book.

WHEN I am dead, my ſon, you will be maſter of my eſtate, which will be a great deal more than the proper and ſuitable maintenance of one family can or ought to require: therefore as you are to be charitable to the ſouls of men, and wiſh them the ſame happineſs which you hope to enjoy in heaven, ſo be charitable to their bodies,

and endeavour to make them as comfortable and as happy as you can upon earth.

Do good, my ſon, firſt of all to thoſe who moſt deſerve it, but remember to do good to all. The greateſt ſinners receive daily inſtances of God's goodneſs towards them. He nouriſhes and preſerves them, that they may repent, and turn to him. Do you therefore imitate God, and think no one too bad to receive your aſſiſtance and kindneſs when you ſee he wants it.

I AM teaching you *Latin* and *Greek*, not that you ſhould deſire to be a great critic, a fine poet, or an eloquent orator. I would not have your heart feel any of thoſe deſires; for a deſire of thoſe accompliſhments is a vanity of the mind, and the maſters of them are generally vain men. The deſire of any thing that is not a real good leſſens the application of the mind after that which is ſo. But I inſtruct you in theſe languages, that at a proper time you may look into the hiſtory of paſt ages, and learn the methods of God's providence over the world; that reading the writings of the ancient ſages, you may ſee how wiſdom and virtue have been the praiſe of great men of all ages, and may fortify your mind by their wiſe ſayings.

NEVER, my child, ſuffer yourſelf to be unemployed. Always form ſome regular plan of buſineſs; for idleneſs is moſt juſtly termed the root of all evil. How many young men have been ruined by having too much leiſure time upon their hands, and being ſuffered to diſpoſe of it according to their own whims and fancies!

As true religion is nothing elſe but ſimple nature governed by right reaſon, ſo it loves and requires great plainneſs and ſimplicity of life. Avoid therefore all ſuperfluous ſhews of finery and equipage. Let your houſe be furniſhed with a neatneſs and propriety according to your ſituation in life, but rather under than above that ſtate. Let your dreſs be confined to the ſame rules, not with a

view to ſet off the beauty of your perſon, but to declare the ſobriety of your mind, that your outward garb may reſemble the inward plainneſs and ſimplicity of your heart.

BUT, my ſon, obſerve this as a principal thing, which I ſhall remind you of as long as I live with you. Hate and deſpiſe all human glory, for it is nothing elſe but human folly. It is the greateſt ſnare and betrayer you can admit into your heart. Love humility in all it's inſtances, and practiſe it in all it's parts; for it is the nobleſt ſtate of the ſoul of man; it will ſet your heart and affections right towards God, and fill you with every ſentiment that is tender and affectionate towards men.

THE greateſt trial of humility is an humble behaviour towards your equals in age, ſtate, and condition in life; therefore be careful of all the motions of your heart towards theſe people. Have no deſire to put any of your equals below you, nor feel any anger towards thoſe who would put themſelves above you. If they are proud, they are ill of a very bad diſtemper; let them therefore have your pity, and perhaps your meekneſs may prove an occaſion of their cure.

THE time of practiſing theſe precepts, my child, will ſoon be over with you. Very ſhort will be your abode in this world. It ſeems but the other day ſince I received theſe ſame inſtructions from my dear father, which I am now leaving with you. And the God, who gave me ears to hear, and a heart to receive what my father ſaid to me, will, I hope, give you grace to love and follow the ſame inſtructions."

THUS did this worthy man educate his ſon, and can any one think that ſuch an education as this would weaken and deject the minds of young people, and deprive the world of any reaſonable and wiſe labours. It is ſo far from it, that there is nothing ſo likely to ennoble and exalt the mind, and prepare it for the moſt heroical exer-

ciſe of all virtues. For who will ſay that a love of God, a deſire of pleaſing him, a love of your neighbour, a love of truth, of reaſon and virtue, a contemplation of eternity, and the rewards of piety, are not ſtronger motives to great and good actions than a little uncertain popular praiſe from imperfect inſignificant beings like ourſelves.

On the other hand there is nothing in reality that more weakens the mind, and reduces it to meanneſs and ſlavery; nothing which makes it leſs maſter of it's own actions, or leſs capable of following reaſon, than a love of worldly praiſe and honour. For as praiſe and honour are often given to perſons and things where they are not due; as that is generally moſt praiſed and honoured, which moſt gratifies the humours, faſhions, and vicious tempers of the world; ſo he that acts with a deſire of praiſe and applauſe muſt part with every other principle. He muſt ſay black is white, put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter, and do the meaneſt, baſeſt things in order to be applauded. For in a corrupt world, as this is, worthy actions are only to be ſupported by their own worth, where, inſtead of being praiſed and honoured, they are moſt often reproached and perſecuted.

Hence to educate children upon a motive of emulation, or a deſire of glory, in a world where glory itſelf is falſe and moſt commonly given wrong, is to deſtroy the natural integrity and fortitude of their minds, and give them a bias which will often carry them to baſe, mean and unworthy actions.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHEWING HOW THE METHOD OF EDUCATING DAUGHTERS, MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO ENTER INTO THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN HUMILITY.

THE turn of mind which is taught and encouraged in the education of daughters, makes it extremely difficult for them to enter into ſuch a ſenſe and practice of humility as the ſpirit of Chriſtianity requires.

THE right education of this ſex is of the utmoſt importance to human life, and there is nothing more deſirable for the common good of all the world. For though women do not carry on the trade and buſineſs of the world, yet as they are mothers and miſtreſſes of families, who have for ſome years the care of the education of their children of both ſexes, they are intruſted with that which is of the greateſt conſequence in human life. As the ſtrength or weakneſs of our bodies is very much owing to the methods of treating us when we are young; ſo the ſoundneſs or folly of our minds is not leſs owing to thoſe firſt diſpoſitions and ways of thinking which we early received from the love and tenderneſs, authority and conſtant converſation of our mothers. It is therefore much to be lamented that this ſex, on whom ſo much depends, who have the firſt forming both of our bodies and minds, are not only educated in pride, but in the fillieſt and moſt contemptible part of it. Whilſt their attention is diverted from every thing that is ſerious and important, they are turned over to the ſtudy of beauty and dreſs, and the whole world conſpires to make them think of nothing elſe.

IT may likewiſe be affirmed, that for the moſt part there is a finer ſenſe, a clearer mind, a readier apprehen-

ſion, and a milder temper in that ſex than in the other; and if theſe qualities were duly cultivated and improved, they would, in all probability, carry them to greater heights of piety than are to be found amongſt the generality of men. Is it not then a melancholy reflection, that perſons ſo naturally qualified to be eminent examples of piety ſhould, by an erroneous education, be made poor and gaudy ſpectacles of the moſt diſguſting vanity?

MANKIND indeed ſeem to conſider them in no other view than as ſo many painted idols, that are to allure and gratify their paſſions; and conſequently if many women are vain, light, trifling creatures, they have this to plead in their excuſe, that they are not only ſuch as their education has made them, but ſuch as the generality of men admire, and the world allows them to be. But then they ſhould conſider that the friends to their vanity are not their real friends; they ſhould conſider that they are to live for themſelves; that they have as great a ſhare in the rational nature as men have, and as much neceſſity to aſpire after the higheſt accompliſhments of a Chriſtian and ſolid virtue, as the graveſt and wiſeſt amongſt Chriſtian philoſophers.

IT is generally ſaid, that women are naturally of little and vain minds; but this I look upon to be as falſe and unreaſonable as to ſay that butchers are naturally cruel; for as their cruelty is not owing to their nature, but to their way of life, which has changed their nature; ſo whatever littleneſs or vanity is to be obſerved in the minds of women is, like the cruelty of butchers, a temper that is wrought into them by that life which they are taught and accuſtomed to lead. At leaſt thus much may be ſaid, that we cannot charge any thing upon their nature, till we take care it is not perverted by their education.

I AM acquainted with a lady of good breeding, great ſenſe, and much religion, who has three daughters that are educated at home, and are not truſted to go out with

any one but herſelf. They have been taught every elegant modern accompliſhment under her own eye. She has heard them read the ſcriptures ſo often, that they can repeat many paſſages by heart; and there is ſcarcely a good book of devotion which you will not find in their cloſets. Had ſhe lived in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, ſhe had in all probability been an eminent example of piety. But as ſhe was born in corrupt times, where ſhe wants examples of Chriſtian perfection, and has hardly ever ſeen piety higher than her own; ſo ſhe has many defects, and communicates them all to her daughters. She is extremely fond of dreſs, and nothing pleaſes her but what is very fine, and beautiful to the eye. Her daughters ſee her great zeal for religion, but then they ſee an equal earneſtneſs for all ſorts of finery; they ſee ſhe is not negligent of her devotion, but then ſhe is more careful to preſerve her beauty. They are afraid to meet her if they have miſſed church; but then they are more afraid to ſee her if they are not dreſſed in the height of the faſhion. They are ſo well acquainted with the temper of their mother, that they even affect to be more pleaſed with dreſs, and to be more fond of every little ornament than they really are, merely to gain her favour.

Now what can be expected from ſuch an education as this? I tremble when I think of the dangers to which theſe unhappy girls are likely to be expoſed. I do not indeed aſſert that no daughters are brought up in a better way than this; for I hope there are many that are: yet I believe it may be ſaid, that much the greater part of them are not brought up ſo well, nor accuſtomed to ſo much religion, as in the inſtance to which I have alluded. Their minds are turned as much to the care of their beauty, and dreſs, and the indulgence of vain deſires, as in the preſent caſe, without having ſuch rules of devotion as theſe girls obſerve. If then we often find young women too ready to receive the firſt fops, beaux, and fine dancers for their huſbands; can we wonder they ſhould like that in men, which they have been taught to admire

in themſelves? If they are often ſeen to loſe the little religion which they were taught in their youth, ought it to ſurprize us more than to ſee a little flower choaked and killed amongſt rank weeds? For perſonal pride and affectation, a delight in beauty, and fondneſs of finery, are diſpoſitions that muſt either kill all religion in the ſoul, or be themſelves killed by it: they can no more thrive together than health and ſickneſs.

SOME people, who judge haſtily, will perhaps ſay that I am exerciſing too great a ſeverity againſt the ſex. But more reaſonable perſons will eaſily obſerve that I entirely ſpare the ſex, and only arraign the education, which I profeſs I cannot ſpare. The bad effects indeed which it generally produces are too much known to admit of any reaſonable doubt.

BUT how poſſible it is to bring up daughters in a more excellent way let the following character declare. A widow lady of good fortune, well born, and well bred, has five daughters whom ſhe educates herſelf. They have lived from their earlieſt infancy in a ſtrict, uniform, and unaffected piety. She has taught them to conſider religion as the one thing needful, and the foundation on which every other virtue is to be built. She brings them up in the habits of all kinds of induſtry that are proper for women, not with a view to their amuſement, but in order to render them ſerviceable to themſelves and others, and to ſave them from thoſe temptations which attend an idle life. She has likewiſe inſtructed them in what are termed more elegant works, and all the modern accompliſhments ſuitable to their ſituation in life: but theſe ſhe tells them are only to be conſidered as relaxations, and pleaſing employments, at proper times, and ſeaſons, and not of any real and eſſential importance. She adds however that ſhe wiſhes them to do theſe things in the beſt manner they are able, not from a deſire to excel others, but becauſe it is the will of God we ſhould make uſe of the talents which he has ſo kindly beſtowed upon us.

She tells them ſhe had rather ſee them reduced to the neceſſity of maintaining themſelves by their own work, than to have riches to excuſe themſelves from labour: for though without labour they might be able to aſſiſt the poor, yet by induſtry ſhe thinks they might be able to aſſiſt them more. If ſhe has lived as free from ſin as it is poſſible for human nature, it is becauſe ſhe is always watching and guarding againſt every ſpecies of pride; and if her virtues are ſtronger and higher than thoſe of other people, it is becauſe they are all founded in a deep humility.

One day ſhe addreſſed her daughters in the following manner. My children, ſays ſhe, when your father died I was much pitied by my friends, as having all the care of a family, and the management of an eſtate fallen upon me. But my own grief was founded upon another principle. I was grieved to ſee myſelf deprived of ſo faithful a friend, and that ſo valuable an example of Chriſtian excellence ſhould be taken from the eyes of his children, before they were at an age to love and follow it. As to the worldly cares, which my friends thought would preſs ſo heavy upon me, they are moſt of them of our own making, and fade away as ſoon as we come to a right knowledge of ourſelves.

Many things which engroſs our attention, and paſs for wiſdom, politeneſs, grandeur, happineſs and fine breeding, really ſhew as great ignorance of ourſelves, and might as juſtly paſs for madneſs as the conceit of a perſon who fancies himſelf to be glaſs or ice. A woman, for inſtance, who dares not appear in the world without fine cloaths, and who thinks it a great happineſs to have a ſkin delicately fair; who had rather die than be reduced to poverty, and be forced to work for a maintenance, is as ignorant of herſelf as the perſon who fancies himſelf to be made of glaſs. For this reaſon all my diſcourſe with you has been to acquaint you with yourſelves, and to accuſtom you to ſuch books and devotions as may beſt inſtruct you in this greateſt of all knowledge.

You would think it hard not to know the family into which you were born, what anceſtors you were deſcended from, and what eſtate was to come to you. But, my children, you may know all this with exactneſs, and yet be as ignorant of yourſelves as he who thinks himſelf to be glaſs. You muſt know then that you are all of you pure ſpirits. I do not mean that you have not bodies that want meat, drink, and ſleep, and cloathing, but that all which deſerves to be called you is nothing elſe but ſpirit; a being ſpiritual and rational in its nature; that is as contrary to all fleſhly and corporeal beings, as life is contrary to death; that is made in the image of God, to live for ever, to enjoy life and reaſon, and knowledge and happineſs in the preſence of God, and the ſociety of angels and glorious ſpirits to all eternity.

Every thing that you call yours beſides this ſpirit is but like your cloathing; ſomething that is only to be uſed for a while, and then to die and wear away, and ſignify no more to you than the cloathing and bodies of other people.

Moreover, my children, you are not only in this manner ſpirits, but fallen ſpirits, and began your life in a ſtate of corruption and diſorder, full of violent paſſions, which blind and darken the reaſon of your mind, and incline you to that which is hurtful. Your bodies are not only poor and periſhing like your cloaths, but they are like infected cloaths that fill you with diſeaſes and diſtempers, which oppreſs the ſoul with ſickly appetites. So that all of us are like two beings, and have as it were two hearts within us: with the one we ſee and taſte, and admire reaſon, purity, and holineſs; with the other we incline to pride, vanity, and ſenſuality.

This internal war we always experience more or leſs, and would you know the one thing moſt neceſſary to all the world, it is to preſerve and perfect all that is rational, holy and devout in our nature, and to mortify and deſtroy all that vanity, pride and ſenſuality which ſprings from the corruption of our ſtate.

I BESEECH you then, my dear children, to honour, improve and perfect the ſpirit that is within you, and prepare it for the kingdom of heaven, to nouriſh it with the love of God, and of virtue; to adorn it with good works, and to preſerve it from the errors and vanities of the world. Whilſt you live thus, you will live like yourſelves; but whenever you are more intent upon adorning your perſons than upon perfecting your ſouls, you are more beſides yourſelves than he who had rather have a laced coat than a healthful body.

I HAVE endeavoured to keep you from every thing that might betray you into weakneſs and folly, or make you think any thing fine but a fine mind; any thing happy but the favour of God; or any thing deſirable but to do all the good you can.

WITH reſpect to the important ſubject of marriage, I leave it entirely to your own choice, either to do as I have done, or to aſpire after perfection in a ſingle ſtate. I deſire nothing, I preſs nothing upon you, but to make the moſt of human life, and to endeavour after perfection in whatever ſtate of life you chuſe. Never therefore conſider yourſelves as perſons that are to be ſeen, admired, and courted by men. Remember you have ſouls to be ſaved from the vanities and follies of a miſerable world, by humility, devotion and ſelf-denial. Learn to live for your own ſakes and the ſervice of God; and let nothing in the world be of any value to you, but what you can make acceptable to him, and a means of your own happineſs.

WHETHER married or unmarried, conſider yourſelves as mothers, ſiſters, friends and relations to all that want your aſſiſtance; and never allow yourſelves to be idle, whilſt others ſtand in need of any thing that your hands can make for them. This uſeful and charitable employment of yourſelves is what I recommend to you with great earneſtneſs, as being a ſubſtantial part of a wiſe and pious life. Beſides the good you will thereby do to other-

people, every virtue of your own heart will be very much improved by it. For next to reading, meditation and prayer, there is nothing that ſo effectually ſecures our hearts from fooliſh paſſions, nothing that preſerves ſo holy and wiſe a frame of mind, as ſome uſeful and charitable employment of ourſelves.

LIVE therefore, my children, as you have begun your lives; let ceremonious viſits, vain diverſions, and acquaintances, have as little of your time as you poſſibly can; contract no fooliſh friendſhips, or ſilly fondneſſes, for particular perſons; but love them moſt that moſt turn your thoughts towards God, and your compaſſion towards the whole world. But above all avoid the converſation of fine bred fops and beaux, and hate nothing more than the idle diſcourſe, the flattery and compliments of that ſort of men; for they are the ſhame of their own ſex, and ought to be the abhorrence of yours.

WHEN you go abroad let humility, modeſty, and a decent carriage be all the ſtate you take upon you; and let tenderneſs, compaſſion, and good nature be all the fine breeding that you ſhew in any place. Be civil to every one, but never pay what are termed compliments which you do not mean by way of being polite. If evil ſpeaking, ſcandal, or backbiting be the converſation where you happen to be, remain ſilent, and retire from ſuch company as ſoon as you can.

THOUGH you intend to marry, yet never let the time come till you meet with a man of religious principles, and who has in ſome degree the perfections you wiſh to attain; who is likely to be a friend to all your virtues, and with whom it is better to live than to want the benefit of his example. Strive to do every thing that is praiſe-worthy, but, I earneſtly beſeech you, do nothing in order to be praiſed.

HAVE great care, my children, of proud and vain thoughts of your own virtues, for as ſoon as ever people

act differently from the common way of the world, and deſpiſe its vanities, the evil ſpirit repreſents to their minds the heights of their own perfections, and is content they ſhould excel in good works, provided he can but make them proud of them.

THEREFORE watch over your virtues with a jealous eye, and reject every vain thought as much as you would every wicked imagination. Never allow yourſelves to deſpiſe others who do not follow your rules of life, but force your heart to love and pray for them, and let humility be always whiſpering into your ears that you yourſelves will fall from thoſe rules to-morrow, if God ſhall leave you to your own ſtrength and wiſdom.

TAKE care to begin every day, not as a proficient in virtue, but as poor beginners, that want the daily aſſiſtance of God to ſave you from the groſſeſt ſins.

YOUR dear father was an humble, watchful, pious, and wiſe man. Whilſt his ſickneſs would ſuffer him to talk with me, his diſcourſe was chiefly about your education. He knew the benefit of humility; he ſaw the ruin that pride had made in our ſex, and therefore he conjured me to renounce the faſhionable way of educating daughters in pride and ſoftneſs, in the care of their beauty and dreſs; and to bring you all up in plainneſs, ſimplicity, and induſtry. He taught me an admirable rule of humility, which he practiſed all the days of his life, viz. "to let no morning paſs without thinking upon ſome frailty and infirmity of our own that may put us to confuſion, make us bluſh inwardly, and entertain a mean opinion of ourſelves"

THUS did this pious widow educate her daughters, and I truſt we are all ſo well convinced of the excellence of her plan, that I need not ſay any thing to recommend it. If we could ſee it in life as well as read it in books, the world would ſoon feel the happy effects of it. A

daughter thus educated would be a bleſſing to any family that ſhe came into, and a fit companion for a wiſe and good man; or if ſhe was either not inclined to change her condition, or could not diſpoſe of herſelf properly in marriage, ſhe would know how to live to great and uſeful purpoſes in a ſingle ſtate.

CHAPTER XV.

THAT ALL ORDERS OF MEN ARE TO PRAY AND INTERCEDE FOR ONE ANOTHER. THAT INTERCESSION NATURALLY AMENDS AND REFORMS THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO USE IT.

THAT interceſſion is a great and neceſſary part of Chriſtian devotion is very evident from the ſcriptures. The firſt followers of Chriſt ſeem to ſupport and maintain all their intercourſe and correſpondence by mutual prayers for each other: twelve o'clock, which was called the ſixth hour of the day, was particularly ſet apart for petitions of that nature.

ST. PAUL, whether he writes to churches or particular perſons, ſhews his interceſſion to be perpetual for them: Thus to the Philippians: "Always in every prayer of mine for you all, making requeſt with joy." His devotion had alſo the ſame care for particular perſons, as appears from the following paſſage. 2 Tim. i. 3. "I thank my God, whom I ſerve from my forefathers, with a pure conſcience, that, without ceaſing, I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day."

IT was this holy interceſſion that raiſed Chriſtians to ſuch a ſtate of mutual love, as far exceeded all that had been praiſed and admired in human friendſhip. And when the ſame ſpirit of interceſſion is again in the world, when Chriſtianity has the ſame power over the hearts of people which it then had, this holy friendſhip will be again in faſhion, and Chriſtians will be again the wonder of the world for that exceeding love which they bore to one another.

BE therefore every morning upon your knees in a ſolemn deliberate performance of this devotion, praying for others

with ſuch importunity and earneſtneſs as you uſe for yourſelf, and you will find all little illnatured paſſions die away, your heart grow great and generous, delighting in the happineſs of others, as you were accuſtomed only to delight in your own. When you have once habituated yourſelf to this practice, you will become courteous, civil, and condeſcending to all about you; and you will be unable to do, or ſay a rude thing to thoſe for whom you had accuſtomed yourſelf to be ſo kind, and compaſſionate in your prayers. This ſort of devotion will fill your hearts with generoſity and tenderneſs, far exceeding what is called fine breeding and good manners.

WHAT can be more admirable than the conduct of a certain prieſt, who in the true ſpirit of the goſpel is perpetually labouring, watching, and praying for a poor country village. Every perſon in it is as dear to him as himſelf, becauſe he prays for them all as often as he prays for himſelf. He never thinks he can love, or do enough for his flock, becauſe he never conſiders them in any other view than as ſo many perſons that, by receiving the gifts and graces of God, are to become his hope and crown of rejoicing. He goes about his pariſh and viſits every perſon in it, but viſits in the ſame ſpirit of piety as he preaches to them; viſits them to encourage their virtue, to aſſiſt them with his advice and counſel, to diſcover their manner of life, and to find out the ſtate of their ſouls, that he may intercede with God for them according to their particular neceſſities.

WHEN he firſt entered into holy orders, he had a haughtineſs of temper, a great contempt and diſregard for all fooliſh and unreaſonable people; but he has prayed away this ſpirit, and has now the greateſt tenderneſs even for the moſt obſtinate ſinners; becauſe he is always hoping that, ſooner or later, God will be pleaſed to hear thoſe prayers which he makes for their repentance.

THE rudeneſs, ill-nature, or perverſe behaviour of any of his flock, uſed at firſt to betray him into impatience;

but it now raiſes no other paſſion in him than a deſire to pray for them. Thus have his prayers for others altered and amended the ſtate of his own heart.

It would delight you to ſee with what ſpirit he converſes, with what tenderneſs he reproves, exhorts, and preaches to thoſe for whom he firſt prays to God. This devotion ſoftens his heart, enlightens his mind, ſweetens his temper, and makes every thing that comes from him inſtructive, amiable and affecting.

At his firſt coming to this little village, it was as diſagreeable to him as a priſon, and every day ſeemed too tedious to be endured in ſo retired a place. He thought his pariſh was too full of poor and mean people, who were none of them fit for the converſation of a gentleman. This put him upon a cloſe application to his ſtudies; he kept much at home, wrote notes upon Homer and Plautus, and ſometimes thought it hard to be called to pray by any poor body, when he was juſt in the midſt of one of Homer's battles.

This was his polite, or I may rather ſay, ignorant turn of mind, before devotion had obtained the government of his heart; but now his days are ſo far from being tedious, or his pariſh too great a retirement, that he only wants more time to do that variety of good which his ſoul thirſts after. The ſolitude of his little pariſh is become matter of great comfort to him, becauſe he hopes that God has placed him and his flock there to make it their way to heaven. He can now not only converſe with, but gladly attend and wait upon the pooreſt kind of people. He is daily watching over the weak and infirm, humbling himſelf to perverſe, rude, ignorant people wherever he can find them, in order to form their minds, and inſtruct them in their duty to God and their neighbour.

All theſe noble thoughts and divine ſentiments are the effect of his great devotion, and his conſtant daily

prayers for his flock. He is mightily affected with this paſſage in the holy ſcriptures, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." This makes him practiſe all the ways of holy living, and aſpire after every inſtance of piety and righteouſneſs, that his prayers for his flock may have their full force and avail much with God.

Now if other people in their various ſituations were to imitate this example, in ſuch a manner as ſuited their ſtate of life, they would certainly find the ſame happy effects from it. If maſters, for inſtance, were to remember their ſervants in their prayers, beſeeching God to bleſs them, and adapting their petitions to the particular wants and neceſſities of each, letting no day paſs without a full performance of this part of devotion, the benefit would be as great to themſelves as to their ſervants.

This ſort of piety would make maſters inclined to every thing that is good towards their ſervants; be watchful of their behaviour, and as ready to require of them an exact obſervance of the duties which they owe as Chriſtians as of thoſe which they owe as ſervants. This conduct would teach them to conſider their ſervants as the ſervants of God; to deſire their perfection; to do nothing before them, that might corrupt their minds; to impoſe no buſineſs upon them, that ſhould leſſen their ſenſe of religion, or hinder them from their proper devotion in publick and private. How natural would it be for ſuch a maſter to perform every part of family devotion; to have conſtant prayers; to excuſe no one's abſence from them; to have the ſcripture and books of piety often read amongſt his ſervants; to take all opportunities of inſtructing them, and raiſing their minds to God, and teaching them to do all their buſineſs as a ſervice to God, and upon the hopes and expectations of another life! How natural would it be for ſuch a perſon to pity their weakneſs and ignorance; to bear with the dullneſs of their underſtandings; or the perverſeneſs of their tempers; to reprove them with tenderneſs, and exhort them with affection.

But if people of rank and fortune think it too low an employment for their ſtate and dignity to exerciſe ſuch a devotion as this for their ſervants, let them conſider, how far they are from the ſpirit of Chriſt, who made himſelf not only an interceſſor, but a ſacrifice for the whole race of ſinful mankind! Let them conſider how miſerable their greatneſs would be, if the Son of God ſhould think it as much below him to pray for them, as they do to pray for their fellow creatures. Let them conſider how far they are from the ſpirit which prays for its moſt unjuſt enemies, if they have not kindneſs enough to pray for thoſe by whoſe labours and ſervice they live in eaſe themſelves.

Again, if parents ſhould thus make themſelves interceſſors with God for their children, continually applying to heaven in behalf of them, nothing would be more likely to form and diſpoſe their own minds to the performance of every thing that is excellent and praiſeworthy. I do not indeed ſuppoſe but that the generality of parents remember their children in their prayers, and call upon God to bleſs them. But the thing here intended is a regular method of recommending all their particular needs and neceſſities unto God, and praying for every grace and virtue which their ſtate in life may peculiarly require.

The ſituation of parents is a holy ſtate, in ſome degree like that of prieſthood, and calls upon them to bleſs their children with their prayers and ſacrifices to God. Thus it was that holy Job watched over and bleſſed his children, he "ſanctified them, he roſe up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all." Job i. 5.

If a father was daily making particular prayers to God that he would pleaſe to inſpire his children with true piety, great humility, and ſtrict temperance; what could be more likely to render the father himſelf exemplary in theſe virtues? How naturally would he grow aſhamed of

wanting ſuch virtues, as he thought neceſſary for his children? So that his prayers for their piety would be a certain means of exalting his own to its greateſt height.

AGAIN, the greateſt reſentments amongſt friends and neighbours, moſt frequently ariſe from poor punctilios and little miſtakes in conduct, a certain ſign that their friendſhip is merely human, and not founded upon religious conſiderations, nor ſupported by ſuch a courſe of mutual prayer for one another as the primitive Chriſtians uſed. For ſuch devotion muſt neceſſarily either deſtroy ſuch tempers, or be itſelf deſtroyed by them. You cannot poſſibly have any ill temper, or ſhew any unkind behaviour to a man, for whoſe welfare you are ſo much concerned, as to be his advocate with God in private.

HENCE we may learn the odious nature, and exceeding guilt of ſpite, hatred, contempt, and angry paſſions. They are not to be conſidered as defects in good nature; not as failings in civility of manners or good breeding, but as baſe diſpoſitions, that are entirely inconſiſtent with the charity of interceſſion. You think it a ſmall matter to be peeviſh, or ill-natured, to ſuch, or ſuch a man; to ridicule one perſon, and to deſpiſe another; but you ſhould conſider whether it is a ſmall matter to want that charity towards theſe people which Chriſtians are not allowed to want towards their moſt inveterate enemies. You may be aſſured that ſuch behaviour is highly criminal, as directly oppoſite to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity as the groſſeſt habits of uncharitableneſs.

THERE was in the neighbourhood where I once reſided a perſon remarkable for his piety, temperance, and many other excellent qualities. No one was more conſtant at the ſervice of the church, or was more affected with it. His charity was very extenſive. Yet he had a prodigious failing along with theſe great virtues. He had a mighty inclination to hear and diſcover all the defects and infirmities of all about him. You were welcome to tell him any thing of any body, provided you

did not do it in the ſtyle of an enemy. He never diſliked an evil ſpeaker, but when his language was rough and paſſionate. If you would but whiſper any thing gently, though it was ever ſo bad in itſelf, he was ready to receive it. You often heard him relating how ſorry he was for the defects and failings of ſuch a neighbour; how tender he was of his reputation; how very loth he was to ſay what he was forced to mention, and how glad he ſhould have been to conceal it, if it had been poſſible.

He once whiſpered to a friend in great ſecrecy ſomething too bad to be ſpoken of publickly, and ended with ſaying how glad he was that it had not yet got abroad, and that he had ſome hopes it might not be true, though the ſuſpicions were very ſtrong. His friend made him this reply, "You ſay you have ſome hopes it is not true; go home therefore to your cloſet, and pray to God for this man as you would pray for yourſelf on the like occaſion; beſeech God to interpoſe in his favour to ſave him from falſe accuſers, and to bring all thoſe to ſhame, who by uncharitable whiſpers and ſecret ſtories wound him like thoſe who ſtab in the dark; and when you have made this prayer, you may if you *can* tell the ſame ſecret to ſome other perſon, that you told to me."

He was exceedingly affected with this rebuke, and felt the force of it upon his conſcience in as lively a manner as if he had ſeen the books opened at the day of judgement. All other arguments might have been reſiſted, but it was impoſſible for him either to reject or follow this advice without being equally ſelf condemned in the higheſt degree. From that time to the preſent he has conſtantly uſed himſelf to this method of interceſſion, and his heart is ſo changed by it, that he can now no more privately whiſper any thing to the prejudice of another, than he can openly pray to God to hurt people.

It may well be wondered how a man of ſo much piety could be ſo long deceived in himſelf; but it was the tenderneſs and ſeeming compaſſion, with which he heard

and related every thing, that deceived both himſelf and others. And if people of virtue, who think as little harm of themſelves as the above mentioned perſon did, were often to try their ſpirit by ſuch an interceſſion, they would frequently find themſelves to be ſuch as they leaſt of all ſuſpected.

I HAVE now laid before you the many and great advantages of interceſſion, and you ſee how the practice of it would tend to make clergymen, maſters, parents, and perſons of every deſcription exemplary in the duties of their ſeveral ſtations. You will therefore, I hope, be perſuaded to adopt it as a neceſſary part of your daily prayers.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON RESIGNATION TO THE DIVINE PLEASURE, AND THE NATURE AND DUTY OF CONFORMING TO THE WILL OF GOD IN ALL OUR ACTIONS.

I HAVE recommended certain ſubjects to be made the conſtant matter of our devotions in the early part of the day, ſuch as thankſgiving, praiſe, humility and interceſſion. There is ſtill however another ſubject which I could wiſh you to add to thoſe already mentioned, and which is not leſs important than any of them: I mean reſignation and conformity to the will of God.

THERE is nothing wiſe, holy, or juſt, but the will of God. It is conformity to his will that gives virtue and perfection to the higheſt ſervices of angels in heaven; and it is ſubmiſſion to the ſame will that makes the ordinary actions of men on earth become an acceptable ſervice unto God. All creatures are created to perform his will. The ſun and moon obey it by the *neceſſity* of their nature, and angels conform to it by the *perfection* of their nature. If therefore you would ſhew yourſelf not to be a rebel, and apoſtate from the order of the creation, you muſt act like beings above and below you. It muſt be the great delight of your ſoul, that God's will may be done by you on earth, as it is in heaven. For this you make a petition in your daily prayers, and for the accompliſhment of this you ought to ſtrive to the utmoſt of your power.

Now reſignation to the divine will ſignifies a chearful approbation, and thankful acceptance, of every thing that comes from God. It is not enough patiently to ſubmit, but we muſt thankfully receive, and fully approve of every thing that by the order of God's providence happens to

us. There is indeed no reaſon why we ſhould be patient under the diſpenſations of providence but what is as good and ſtrong a reaſon why we ſhould be thankful.

If we were under the hands of a wiſe and good phyſician who could not miſtake our caſe, or do any thing for us but what certainly tended to our benefit, it would not be enough to be patient and abſtain from murmurings at ſuch a phyſician: it would be as great a breach of duty and gratitude to him, not to be pleaſed and thankful for what he did, as it would be to murmur againſt him. Now this is our true ſtate with relation to God: we cannot be ſaid ſo much as to believe in him, unleſs we believe him to be a God of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, and that he willeth and ordereth all things for the beſt. Whenever therefore you find yourſelf diſpoſed to uneaſineſs or murmuring at any thing which is the effect of God's providence, you muſt look upon yourſelf as denying either the wiſdom or goodneſs of God; for every complaint neceſſarily ſuppoſes this.

Every man is by the law of his creation, by the firſt article of his creed, obliged to conſent to and acknowledge the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in his general providence over the whole world. He is to believe that it is the effect of God's great wiſdom and goodneſs, that the world itſelf was formed at ſuch a particular time and in ſuch a manner. He is to believe that God's providence over ſtates, kingdoms, times and ſeaſons is all for the beſt; that revolutions, perſecutions, wars, famines, and plagues are all permitted and conducted by God and providence to the general good of man in this ſtate of trial.

A good man is to believe all this with the ſame fulneſs of aſſent, that he believes God to be in every place, though he neither ſees nor can comprehend the manner of his preſence. This is a noble magnificence of thought, a true religious greatneſs of mind, to be thus affected with God's general providence; admiring, and magnify-

ing his wiſdom in all things; never murmuring at the courſe of the world, or the ſtate of things, but looking upon all around, at heaven, and earth, as a pleaſed ſpectator; and adoring that inviſible hand which gives laws to all motions, and over-rules all events to ends ſuitable to the higheſt wiſdom and goodneſs.

It is very common for people to allow themſelves great liberty in finding fault with ſuch things as have only God for their cauſe. Every one thinks he may juſtly ſay what a wretched abominable climate he lives in. This man is frequently telling you what a diſmally cold day it is, and what intolerable ſeaſons we have. Another thinks he has very little to thank God for, and that it is hardly worth his while to live in a world ſo full of changes and revolutions.

But this temper is extremely impious, nor has religion yet obtained a ſeat in the heart of him who is poſſeſſed of it. It ſounds indeed much better to murmur at the courſe of the world or the ſtate of things than to murmur at providence; to complain of the ſeaſons and weather, than to complain of God; but if theſe have no other cauſe but God, and his providence, it is a poor diſtinction to ſay that you are only angry at the things, but not at the cauſe and director of them.

But to proceed: Reſignation and thankſgiving to God are only acts of piety when they are acts of faith, truſt, and confidence in the divine goodneſs. The faith of Abraham was an act of true piety, becauſe it ſtopped at no difficulty, was not altered or leſſened by any human appearances. It firſt of all carried him againſt all ſhew of happineſs from his own kindred and country into a ſtrange land, not knowing whither he went. It was this ſame faith againſt ſo many pleas of nature, ſo many appearances of reaſon, that prevailed upon him to offer up Iſaac, accounting that God was able to raiſe him up from the dead.

Now this faith is the true pattern of Chriſtian reſignation, which requires no more to the ſupport of it, than ſuch a plain aſſurance of the goodneſs of God, as Abraham had of his veracity. And if you aſk yourſelf what greater reaſon Abraham had to depend upon the divine veracity, than you have to depend upon the divine goodneſs, you will find that none can be given. You cannot therefore look upon this as an unneceſſarily high pitch of perfection, ſince the want of it implies the want, not of any high notions, but of a plain and ordinary faith in the moſt certain doctrines both of natural and revealed religion.

THUS much concerning reſignation to the divine will, as it ſignifies a thankful approbation of God's general providence. It is now to be conſidered as it ſignifies a thankful acceptance of God's particular providence over us.

EVERY man is to look upon himſelf as a particular object of God's providence, and as much under his care and protection, as if the world had been made for him alone. It is not by chance that any man is born at ſuch a time, of ſuch parents, and in ſuch a place and condition: it is certain that every ſoul comes into the body at ſuch a time and in ſuch circumſtances by the expreſs deſignment of God; and as certain that by his deſignment ſome beings are angels, and others are men. It is as much by the counſel and eternal purpoſes of God that you ſhould be born in your particular ſtate, or that Iſaac ſhould be the ſon of Abraham, as that Gabriel ſhould be an angel, and Iſaac a man.

THE ſcripture aſſures us that it was by divine appointment that our bleſſed Saviour was born at Bethlehem and at ſuch a time. Now though it was owing to the dignity of his perſon, and the great importance of his birth, that thus much of the divine counſel was declared to the world, concerning the time and manner of it; yet we

are as ſure from the ſame ſcriptures, that the time and manner of every man's coming into the world is according to ſome eternal purpoſes and directions of divine providence, and in ſuch time and place, and circumſtances as are directed and governed by God for particular ends of his wiſdom and goodneſs. This we are as certain of from plain revelation as we can be of any thing. For if we are told that not a "ſparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father;" can any thing more ſtrongly teach us, that much greater beings, ſuch as human ſouls, come not into the world without the care and direction of God? If it is ſaid that the very hairs of our heads are numbered; is it not to teach us that not even the ſmalleſt thing imaginable can happen to us by chance?

How noble an idea does this give us of the divine omnipotence preſiding over the whole world, and governing ſuch a long chain and combination of ſeeming accidents and chances, to the common and particular advantages of all beings; ſo that every perſon in ſuch a wonderful variety of cauſes, contingencies, and events, ſhould fall into ſuch a particular ſtate as was foreſeen and foreordained to his beſt advantage, and ſo as to be moſt ſerviceable to the wiſe and glorious ends of God's government of all the world?

After ſeeing things in ſuch a point of view, how is it poſſible to be ungrateful and murmur at the beſt of Beings, and perhaps at the very thing that is to prove the cauſe of our ſalvation? Had you it in your power to get that which you think it ſo grievous to want, it might poſſibly be that very thing which of all others would moſt expoſe you to eternal miſery. So that whether we conſider the infinite goodneſs of God, that cannot chuſe amiſs for us, or our own great ignorance of what is moſt advantageous to us, there can be nothing ſo reaſonable or pious, as to have no will but the will of God, and deſire nothing for ourſelves in our perſons, our ſtate and condi-

tion but that which the good providence of God appoints us.

Now you muſt not reſerve the exerciſe of this pious temper to any particular times and occaſions, or fancy how reſigned you will be to God, if ſuch or ſuch trials ſhould happen. For this is amuſing and deceiving yourſelf with the notion or idea of reſignation inſtead of the virtue itſelf. Do not therefore pleaſe yourſelf with thinking how piouſly you would act and ſubmit to God in a plague, a famine, or a perſecution, but be intent upon the perfection of the preſent day, and be aſſured that the beſt way of ſhewing a true zeal is to make little things the occaſions of great piety.

BEGIN then in the ſmalleſt matters, and on the moſt ordinary occaſions, and accuſtom your mind to the daily exerciſe of this pious temper in the loweſt occurrences of life. And when a contempt, an affront, a little injury, loſs, or diſappointment, or the ſmalleſt events of every day continually raiſe your mind to God in proper acts of reſignation, then you may juſtly hope, that you ſhall be numbered amongſt thoſe who are reſigned and thankful to God in the greateſt trials and afflictions.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON EVENING PRAYER, AND ON THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF EXAMINATION.

I AM now coming to the ſubject of evening prayers, the propriety of which, I hope, will be allowed by every perſon, who profeſſes a regard for piety.

THE hour that was uſed by the primitive Chriſtians for this purpoſe was ſix o'clock, but in the preſent ſtate of the world, the hour for family prayer muſt be determined according to the inclination or circumſtances of the various families who practice this cuſtom, as muſt alſo that of private devotion, which I intend more particularly to treat of in this chapter. It is however indiſpenſably neceſſary that at ſome one hour of the evening every true Chriſtian ſhould call himſelf to account, and review all his behaviour from the beginning of the day.

THE neceſſity of this examination is founded on the neceſſity of repentance: for, "if we *confeſs* our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs," which is as much as to ſay that then only our ſins are forgiven, when they are thus *confeſſed* and *repented* of. There ſeems therefore the greateſt neceſſity that all our daily actions ſhould be conſtantly obſerved and brought to account, leſt by a negligence we load ourſelves with the guilt of unrepented ſins. Hence the examination of ourſelves every evening is not only to be conſidered as a commendable rule, and fit for a wiſe man to obſerve, but as ſomething that is not leſs neceſſary than daily confeſſion and repentance of our ſins; becauſe this daily repentance is of very little ſignification, and loſes all it's chief benefits, unleſs it be a particular confeſſion and repentance of the ſins of that day.

PERHAPS you have hitherto only been accuſtomed to confeſs yourſelf a ſinner in general terms, and aſk forgiveneſs in the groſs, without any particular remembrance of, or contrition for, the individual ſins of that day; and by this practice you are brought to believe, that the ſame ſhort general form of confeſſion is a ſufficient repentance for every day. Now I am perſuaded that the principal reaſon of our faults being ſo ſeldom amended, is becauſe they are not diſtinctly ſpecified, and conſtantly brought in review before us.

SUPPOSE that ſome perſon ſhould hold that a confeſſion of our ſins in general once at the end of every week was ſufficient: muſt you not tell ſuch a man, that by leaving himſelf to this weekly and general confeſſion he would be in great danger of forgetting a great many of his ſins? I am ſure you muſt be fully aware of the unreaſonableneſs and impiety of this opinion, and think it eaſy enough to ſhew the danger and folly of it. You would, I hope, conſider yourſelf as chargeable with great impiety, if you were to go to bed without confeſſing yourſelf to be a ſinner, and aſking pardon of God; you would not think it ſufficient that you did ſo yeſterday.

LET it be ſuppoſed that on a certain day you had been guilty of any of the following ſins; that you had told a vain lie, aſcribing to yourſelf ſomething falſly through pride; that you had been guilty of detraction, or indulged yourſelf in intemperance. Let it be ſuppoſed that on the next day you had lived in a contrary manner; that you had neglected no duty of devotion, and had been the reſt of the day employed in your proper buſineſs. Now imagine that on the evening of both theſe days you only uſe the ſame confeſſion in general terms, conſidering it rather as a duty that is to be performed every night, than as a repentance that is to be ſuited to the particular ſtate of every day. Can it with any reaſon be ſaid that each day has had it's proper repentance? Might we not as well ſay there was no difference in the guilt of theſe days, as to ſay there need be no different repentance at the end of them?

But in order to make this examination ſtill more beneficial, every man ſhould oblige himſelf to a certain method in it. As every man has ſomething peculiar in his nature, ſtronger inclinations to ſome vices than others, ſome infirmities that ſtick cloſer to him, and are harder to be conquered than others; and as it is as eaſy for a man to know this of himſelf, as to know whom he likes and diſlikes, ſo it is highly neceſſary, that theſe particularities of our natures and tempers ſhould never eſcape a ſevere trial at our evening repentance. I ſay a ſevere trial, becauſe nothing but a rigorous ſeverity againſt theſe natural tempers is ſufficient to conquer them. They are the right eyes that are not to be ſpared, but to be plucked out and caſt from us. For as they are the infirmities of nature, ſo they have the ſtrength of nature, and muſt be treated with great oppoſition, or they will be too ſtrong for us.

He therefore who knows himſelf moſt of all ſubject to anger, and eaſily ruffled by trifles, muſt be very exact and conſtant in his examination of this temper every evening. He muſt ſearch out every ſlip that he hath made of that kind, whether in thought, word or action; he muſt ſhame and reproach and accuſe himſelf before God for every thing that he has ſaid and done in obedience to this paſſion. He muſt no more allow himſelf to forget the examination of this temper than to forget his whole prayers.

Again; if you find that vanity is your prevailing temper, that it is always putting you upon the adornment of your perſon, and catching every thing that compliments or flatters your abilities, never ſpare or forget this temper in your evening examination; but confeſs to God every vanity of thought, word or action, that you have been guilty of. In this manner ſhould all people act with regard to their chief frailty, be it what it may; and though this method ſhould not immediately do all they could wiſh, yet by a conſtant practice it would certainly in a ſhort time produce it's deſired effect.

FURTHER: As all ſtates and employments of life have their particular dangers and temptations, and expoſe people more to ſome ſins than others, ſo every man, who wiſhes his own improvement, ſhould make it a neceſſary part of his evening's examination to conſider how he has avoided, or fallen into ſuch ſins, as are moſt common to his ſtate of life. For as our buſineſs or condition in life has great power over us, ſo nothing but ſuch watchfulneſs as this can ſecure us from thoſe temptations to which it daily expoſes us. The poor man from his ſituation in life is always in danger of repining and uneaſineſs; the rich man is moſt expoſed to ſenſuality and indulgence; the tradeſman to exacting unreaſonable profits; the ſcholar to pride and vanity; ſo that in every ſtate of life a man ſhould always have a ſtrict eye upon thoſe faults to which he is particularly liable.

I WOULD moreover exhort you at the hour of examination and confeſſion to reflect ſeriouſly on the guilt of ſin, which has done ſo much miſchief to our nature, and expoſed it to ſuch great puniſhment, and made it ſo odious to God, that nothing leſs than ſo great an atonement as the Son of God, and the greateſt repentance of our own, can reſtore us to the divine favour. Conſider next your own particular ſhare in the guilt of ſin. And if you would know with what zeal you ought to repent yourſelf, conſider how you would exhort another ſinner to repentance; and what repentance and amendment you would expect from him whom you judged to be the greateſt ſinner in the world.

Now this caſe every man may juſtly reckon to be his own; you may fairly look upon yourſelf to be the greateſt ſinner you know in the world. Firſt, because you are better acquainted with the folly of your own heart than with that of other people's, and can charge yourſelf with various ſins which you only know of yourſelf, and cannot be ſure that other ſinners are guilty of them. Secondly, becauſe the greatneſs of our guilt ariſes chiefly from the greatneſs of God's goodneſs towards us; from the par-

ticular graces and bleſſings, the favours, the lights and inſtructions that we have received from him, and as theſe circumſtances are only known to ourſelves, ſo we alone can judge of the heinouſneſs of our ſin. This is the reaſon why the greateſt ſaints in all ages condemned themſelves as the greateſt ſinners; becauſe they knew ſome aggravations of their own ſins, which they could not know of other people's.

THE right way therefore to fill your heart with true contrition, and a deep ſenſe of your own unworthineſs is this: you are not to conſider or compare the outward form or courſe of your life, with that of other people's, and then think yourſelf leſs ſinful than they, becauſe the outward courſe of your life is leſs ſinful than theirs; but in order to know your own guilt, you muſt conſider your own particular circumſtances, your health, your ſickneſs, your youth, or age, your particular calling, the excellence of your education, the degrees of light and inſtruction you have received, the good men you have converſed with, the admonitions you have had, the good books you have read, the numberleſs multitudes of divine bleſſings, graces, and favours that you have received, the good motions of grace that you have reſiſted, the reſolutions of amendment that you have broken, and the checks of conſcience that you have diſregarded. A careful and frequent examination of ourſelves in theſe reſpects will mightily tend to humble us in our own eyes; make us very apprehenſive of our own guilt; and very tender of cenſuring and condemning other people, when, for aught we can tell, the ſeverity of God may be more due to us than to them.

WHENEVER therefore you are angry at ſin or ſinners, whenever you read or think of God's indignation and wrath at wicked men; let this teach you to be the moſt ſevere in your cenſure, and moſt humble and contrite in the acknowledgment and confeſſion of your own ſins, that you know of no ſinner equal to yourſelf.

To conclude this chapter. Having confeſſed and aſked pardon for your ſins, you muſt ſtill look upon yourſelf as obliged to repeat ſome ſhort prayer juſt before you go to bed. The ſubject which is moſt proper at that time will be death. Let your petitions be for right ſentiments of the approach and importance of it; and beg of God that your mind may be poſſeſſed with ſuch a ſenſe of it's nearneſs, that you may make every day a preparation for it. Repreſent to your imagination that your bed is your grave; that you are to have no more to do with this world, and that it will be owing to God's great mercy if you are ſuffered to behold another morning. Finally, commit yourſelf to ſleep as into the hands of God, as one that is to awake amongſt ſpirits that are ſeparated from the body, and are waiting for the judgment of the laſt day.

HOWEVER ſuch thoughts as the foregoing may be ridiculed by the gay and thoughtleſs, yet I hope that many into whoſe hands this book may chance to fall will ſuffer no evening to eſcape without a ſolemn performance of the exerciſes here recommended.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CONCLUSION. OF THE EXCELLENCY AND GREATNESS OF A DEVOUT SPIRIT.

I HAVE now finiſhed what I intended in this treatiſe. I have explained the nature of devotion, both as it ſignifies a life devoted to God, and as it ſignifies a regular method of daily prayer. I have now only to add a word or two in recommendation of a life governed by this ſpirit of devotion; for though it is as reaſonable to ſuppoſe it the deſire of all Chriſtians to arrive at Chriſtian perfection, as to ſuppoſe that all ſick men deſire to be reſtored to perfect health; yet experience ſhews us that nothing wants more to be preſſed, repeated and forced upon men's minds than the plaineſt rules of Chriſtianity.

NAY, in this polite age of ours we have ſo lived away the ſpirit of devotion, that many ſeem afraid to be even ſuſpected of it, imagining that great devotion is founded in ignorance and poorneſs of ſpirit; and that little, weak, and dejected minds are generally the greateſt proficients in it. I intend therefore to ſhew that great devotion is the nobleſt diſpoſition of the greateſt and nobleſt ſouls, and that they, who think it receives any advantage from ignorance and poorneſs of ſpirit, are themſelves not a little, but entirely unacquainted with the nature of devotion, the nature of God and the nature of themſelves.

AND firſt: Who reckons it a ſign of a poor little mind, for a man to be full of reverence and duty to his parents, to have the trueſt love and honour for his friend, or to excel in the higheſt inſtances of gratitude to his benefactor? Are not theſe affections the moſt eminent in the moſt exalted and perfect minds? And yet what is the higheſt devotion, but the higheſt exerciſe of theſe affec-

tions of duty, reverence, love, honour and gratitude to the amiable, glorious parent, friend and benefactor of all mankind? So long therefore as duty to parents, love to friends and gratitude to benefactors, are conſidered as honourable to human nature, ſo long muſt devotion, which is nothing elſe but duty, love and gratitude to God, have the higheſt place amongſt the higheſt virtues.

FARTHER: that part of devotion which expreſſes itſelf in ſorrowful confeſſion, and penitential tears of a broken and contrite heart, is very far from being any ſign of a little and ignorant mind. Who does not acknowledge it an inſtance of a liberal ingenuous and brave mind, to confeſs a fault and aſk pardon for any offence? Are not the fineſt and moſt improved minds the moſt remarkable for this excellent temper? Is it not alſo allowed that the nobleneſs and excellence of a man's ſpirit is much ſhewn when his ſorrow and indignation at himſelf ariſe in proportion to the folly of his crime, and the goodneſs and greatneſs of the perſon he has offended? But if theſe things are ſo, then the greater any man's mind is, the more he knows of God and himſelf, the more will he be diſpoſed to proſtrate himſelf before God in all the humbleſt acts and expreſſions of repentance.

DEVOTION therefore is ſo far from being beſt ſuited to little ignorant minds, that a true elevation of ſoul, a lively ſenſe of honour, and great knowledge of God and ourſelves, are the greateſt natural helps that our devotion hath.

NOW on the other hand it ſhall be made to appear by a variety of arguments, that indevotion is founded in the moſt exceſſive ignorance.

AND firſt: our bleſſed Lord and his apoſtles were eminent inſtances of great and frequent devotion. Now if we will grant, (as all Chriſtians muſt grant) that their great devotion was founded on a true knowledge of the nature of devotion, the nature of God and the nature of

man; then it is plain that all thoſe who are inſenſible of the duty of devotion are in ſuch a ſtate of extreme ignorance as neither to know God, nor themſelves, nor devotion. For if a right knowledge in theſe three reſpects produces great devotion, as in the caſe of our Saviour and his apoſtles, then a neglect of devotion muſt be chargeable upon ignorance.

AGAIN: how comes it that moſt people have recourſe to devotion when they are in ſickneſs, diſtreſs, or fear of death? Is it not becauſe this ſtate ſhews them more clearly their want of God, and their own weakneſs, than they perceive them at other times? Is it not becauſe their infirmities, their approaching end convince them of ſomething which they did not half perceive before? Now if devotion at theſe ſeaſons is the effect of a better knowledge of God and ourſelves, then the neglect of devotion at other times is always owing to great ignorance of God and ourſelves.

FARTHER: as indevotion is ignorance; ſo it is the moſt ſhameful ignorance, and ſuch as is to be charged with the greateſt folly. This will fully appear to any one who conſiders by what rules we are to judge of the excellency of any knowledge, or the ſhamefulneſs of any ignorance. Now knowledge itſelf would be no excellence, nor ignorance any reproach to us, but that we are rational creatures. But if this be true, then it follows plainly that, that knowledge which is moſt ſuitable to our rational nature, and which as rational creatures it moſt concerns us to know, is our higheſt and beſt knowledge; and that ignorance which relates to things that are moſt eſſential to us as rational creatures, and which we are moſt concerned to know, is of all others the moſt groſs and ſhameful ignorance.

IF therefore our relation to God be our greateſt concern; if our advancement in his favour be our higheſt advancement, he that hath the higheſt notions of the excellency of this relation; he that moſt ſtrongly per-

ceives the high worth, and great value of holineſs and virtue; that judges every thing little, when compared with it, proves himſelf to be maſter of the beſt and moſt excellent knowledge.

AGAIN: to ſee the dignity and greatneſs of a devout ſpirit, we need only compare it with other diſpoſitions that are choſen in the room of it.

ST. JOHN tells us that all in the world, that is all the diſpoſitions and affections of a worldly life, are, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life. Let us therefore conſider what wiſdom or excellency of mind there is required to qualify a man for theſe delights.

LET us ſuppoſe a man given up to the pleaſures of the body; ſurely this can be no ſign of a fine mind or an excellent ſpirit; for if he has but the appetite of an animal he is great enough for theſe enjoyments. Let us ſuppoſe him devoted to honours and ſplendours, to be fond of ſhew and equipage; if this diſpoſition required any great parts or fine underſtanding to make a man capable of it, it would prove the world to abound in great wits. Let us ſuppoſe him to be in love with riches, and to be ſo eager in the purſuit of them as never to think he has enough; now this paſſion is ſo far from ſuppoſing any excellent ſenſe or great underſtanding, that blindneſs and folly are the beſt ſupports that it hath.

BUT can libertines bring any ſuch charges as theſe againſt devotion? They may as well endeavour to charge light with every thing that belongs to darkneſs. Let them only grant that there is a God, and providence, and they will have granted enough to juſtify the wiſdom, and ſupport the honour of devotion. For if there is an infinitely wiſe and good Creator, in whom we live, move, and have our being, whoſe providence governs all things in all places, ſurely it muſt be the higheſt act of our underſtanding to conceive rightly of him; it muſt be the

nobleſt inſtance of judgment, the utmoſt perfection of our nature to worſhip and adore this univerſal providence, to conform to its laws, to ſtudy its wiſdom, and to live and act every where as in the preſence of this infinitely good and wiſe Creator.

LASTLY, courage and bravery are words of a great ſound, and ſeem to ſignify an heroic ſpirit, but yet humility, which ſeems to be the loweſt and meaneſt part of devotion, is a more certain argument of a noble and courageous mind: for humility contends with greater enemies, is more conſtantly engaged, more violently aſſaulted, bears more, ſuffers more, and requires greater courage to ſupport itſelf than any ſpecies of worldly bravery. A man who dares be poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world to approve himſelf to God, who reſiſts and rejects all human glory, who oppoſes the clamours of his paſſions, who meekly puts up with all injuries, and wrongs, and dares ſtay for his reward till the inviſible hand of God gives to every one his proper place, endures a much greater trial, and exerts a nobler fortitude than he who is bold and daring in the day of battle.

INDEED the boldneſs of a ſoldier, if he is a ſtranger to the ſpirit of devotion, is rather weakneſs than fortitude; it is at beſt but mad paſſion and heated ſpirits, and has no more true valour in it than the fury of a tiger; for as we cannot lift up a hand, or ſtir a foot, but by a power that is lent us from God, ſo bold actions that are not directed by the laws of God, and are not ſo many executions of his will, partake no more of true bravery than ſedate malice does of Chriſtian patience.

REASON is our univerſal law, that obliges us in all places and at all times; and no actions have any honour but ſo far as they are inſtances of our obedience to reaſon. It is as baſe and cowardly to be bold and daring againſt the principles of reaſon and juſtice, as to be bold and daring in lying and perjury.

WOULD we then exercise a true fortitude, we must do all in the spirit of devotion; we must be valiant against the corruptions of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and the temptations of the devil; we must enlist ourselves under the banners of Christ, and nobly encounter every difficulty and danger that we meet with in our Christian warfare.

I HAVE subjoined these reflections, for the sake of those people, who consider great devotion as bigotry, and poorness of spirit, and I hope they will now be convinced of the folly and absurdity of such an opinion. I hope they will be fully satisfied that all worldly attainments whether of greatness, wisdom, or bravery, are but empty sounds; and that nothing is wise, or great, or noble in human spirit, but rightly to know and heartily to worship and adore the great God, who is the support and life of all spirits whether in heaven or in earth.

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